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STARBURST

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Brains in boxes

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Find out how it is done

BLACK ADDER

Studio report on his return

PREVIEW

Sneak film previews

WARNER BROTHERS

Cartoon World of laughter

**1985 FILM REVIEW
SPECIAL**





STARBURST
Volume 8 Number 6
February 1986 issue

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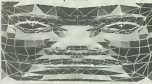


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A wintry scene from *Legend*

THINGS TO COME

BRAZIL – Best Film

The Los Angeles film critics Association has named *Brazil* as the best picture of 1985. It also named the film's director, Terry Gilliam, as best director. The film has been the source of controversy and was only released in the States very near the end of 1985.

Universal Pictures and 20th Century Fox International had jointly financed *Brazil*.

Universal put up \$9 million for the North American rights while Fox had provided \$6 million for European rights and had already released the movie. Executives of Universal Pictures were not happy with the down-beat ending and asked Gilliam to change it for a happier one. Gilliam cut it but not enough for Universal to be happy with it. The film was then taken off the Universal schedule and work started on an alternative ending. Terry Gilliam campaigned for the film to be released without any further changes with even the film's producer, Amnon Milchan, offering to buy the film distribution rights back from Universal. The Los Angeles

critics were even treated to a sneak showing of the film. This was to be the deciding factor. With the Los Angeles Critics Association voting *Brazil* as best film this forced Universal's hand they gave the go ahead for its release.

It was released on the 25th December in Los Angeles. This one week of 1985 will qualify it for consideration of any academy awards for the 1985 year. It will be released on a wider basis in February this year.

Back to the Future

Back to the Future has done extremely well at the box office over the Christmas period. It consistently came top of the film ratings and has enjoyed much critical acclaim. The other Spielberg film, *Goonies* got what it deserved – a poor showing generally.

Santa's Christmas

Santa Claus – The Movie surprised many critics over the Christmas period. It had been much slated, even by our own Alan Jones, but seems to have scored well where it was aimed – namely with the young child audience. Box office figures generally placed it second to *Back to the Future*. Well done Santa!

Robin Hood

Robin of Sherwood is now scheduled for transmission in March for a run of thirteen one-hour programmes. The series was much praised for its artistry. Even the Controller of BBC1 has complimented it. Apparently he would like to see *Doctor Who* with the same fine production values.

The last series ended with Mary Whitehouse taking exception to it. She objected to Robin's rebirth taking place at Easter! With Michael Praed firmly established as the Prince of Maledavia in *Dynasty* the reborn Robin in the form of Jason Connery will be seen clearly for the first time at the start of this new series.



In the States they were in two minds whether or not to show show it
BACK TO THE FUTURE: George and Lorraine McFly proving it pays to write science fiction novels!







Coming Soon - **ENEMY MINE**: Louis Gossett, Jr (left) and Dennis Quaid (right) are enemy pilots marooned together on a deadly planet

Enemy Mine

Enemy Mine was recently given a preview screening in London. Despite earlier reports of a slow disappointing production it came off rather well. Generally critics liked, even praised, the outer-space adaptation of *Robinson Crusoe*. There will certainly be more on this film in future issues.

Time Travel

Michael J Fox of *Back to the Future* hosted an interesting television programme on time travel shown on ITV this Christmas. It featured some interesting clips including *The Time Machine*, *Time After Time*, *Somewhere in Time* and of course *Back to the Future*. It was an interesting programme which also featured comments from various science-fiction writers.

By coincidence the next issue of "Starburst" will be a time-travel special.

Teen Wolf

Star of *Back to the Future* is back in a new film. Well sort of!

This amazing film (amazingly bad that is!) was

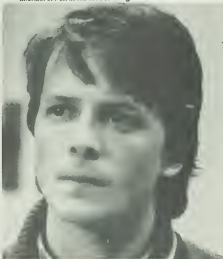
★ **STARBURST**

made before *Back to the Future* and has waited until now for its release (or escape) in this country. In the States it apparently grossed a quite "staggering \$9.8 million in the

first few days".

Starring Michael J. Fox in his first leading role in the film world it is the story of a shy teenage boy who turns into a hero-worshipped werewolf!

Michael J. Fox in his first starring film-role - **TEEN WOLF**



Knights of God

Knights of God is billed as an exciting new thirteen-part family drama. It has been in production for the last part of 1985 with location shooting taking place around Southampton and North Wales.

It is set in the year 2020 when parts of Great Britain have been devastated by civil war after years of political unrest. Now the country has been split between North and South, London destroyed and Winchester taking its place as the capital.

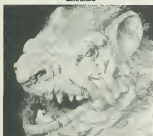
Out of the wreckage has risen a military governing elite called *The Knights of God* which is led by the ruthless dictator who is out to destroy anyone or anything that gets in his way.

There is growing resistance to the new order headed by Owen Edwards. His rebellious teenage son Gervase is captured by the Knights and sent to their re-education camp to be brainwashed into changing his allegiance from the freedom-fighters.

Knights of God is due for ITV network transmission sometime this year.

That Was The Year That Was

Ghoulies



Mad Max III: Beyond Thunderdome



Death Warm'd Up



View To A Kill, A



Starburst feature by Alan Jones

ACCORDING to the latest figures, we went back to the cinema in droves throughout 1985. Admissions were up by 37 per cent attributable to – depending on whom you want to believe – luxury theatre refurbishments by the three major chains, British Film Year maximising public awareness, Rambo, and the novelty wearing off on the home video front. With regards to the latter, it's also worth noting the impact of heavier censorship of films on video. And if the current climate is to be noted, the television premieres of 1985's fantasy releases will probably be heavily edited too. Which can only mean business will keep steadily improving as you can be sure of seeing the fullest possible version of a film the censor will allow in the darkness of your local cinema. Personally, I couldn't be happier about this state of affairs as I am one of the old school of thought who believes that going to the movies is one experience that cannot be duplicated. As P.T. Barnum once said, "Nothing will ever be invented to keep the general public at home". I couldn't agree more. Mind you, as far as I'm concerned, 1985 will go down in history as the year where seeing half of the fantasy releases was more down to completionist duty than actual anticipation. You don't believe me? Well fasten your seatbelts for a whirlwind round-up of the 50 genre movies seen in the cinema during 1985.

Actually the year started well. In January I wrote that *The Terminator* was "... already a contender for the film of 1985", and I don't think many would disagree with that even now. *Repo Man* too left a very distinctive mark. Off-beat,

bizarre and very funny, Alex Cox's movie is destined to be a cult film of many years to come and not just one of the best of last year. It was a true original in all possible senses. Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* was too long – arguments over which has held up its belated American release – but it was a unique mix of razor-sharp parody, dazzling themes and startling production design. At the time I called it a failure on certain levels but after reviewing the major disappointments in store, I can now see *Brazil* in a new perspective. Gilliam at least tried to pursue different avenues leading to a satirical vision of the near future. For that, in retrospect, I am very grateful. Poverty row exploitation from down-under was served up in *Death Warm'd Up*, David Blyth's enjoyable hi-tech amalgam of recent popular trends. *Starman* seemed to be one of those love it or hate it films. The plot did have a few

Sheena



Emerald Forest, The



Bride, The





Razorback
Starman



Black Cauldron, The



Legend



Baby



LifeForce



Morons from Outer Space



holes admittedly but it was an emotionally uplifting treat which made me float out of the cinema feeling great instead of depressed. Another film in the same category was *Return to Oz*. Never having been a fan of the Judy Garland musical as I could view Walter Murch's vision as a film in its own right. And I liked what I saw. Fairuza Balk's wonderful performance nearly made me forget all the rude criticisms I've levelled at child actors over the years and Disney can be applauded for not cutting back the darker elements of Baum's brainchild. Brian De Palma's *Body Double* was everything I expected, and wanted, it to be. Visually stunning, breath-taking set-pieces and a gorgeous Pino Donaggio score, Melanie Griffith's knife-edged performance was the icing on the cake. *Trancers* was the best Charles Band release of the year. Unlike the imaginative but mediocre *Swordkill* and the truly pathetic *Ghoulies*, *Trancers* was a fast-paced comic-book full of surprise and invention. *Night of the Comet* turned out to be an even more likeable cheap thrill – its indefinable quirkiness made it hard to resist. For sheer gleeful enjoyment, this post-apocalyptic fable was one of the year's more welcome releases even though it did lose some zombie footage here in the UK. *A Nightmare on Elm Street* came just in time to stop us all writing-off Wes Craven as another horror has-been. But as much as I liked the film – Craven's mining of a simple fear to the fullest effect – I think over-reaction to the lack of gore product in 1985 has placed the film on an undeserved pedestal. Speaking of gore movies, I have always had a soft spot for the *Friday the 13th* series – a factor obviously helping one's enjoyment of *Friday the 13th*. Part V: A New

Beginning. Although trashy and vulgar, Part V had a sense of humour that I found just on target even though I realised I was just willing putty in director Danny Steinmann's hands. *Cocoon* was equally manipulative. Ron Howard battered down our resistance and made the improbable acceptable. The outstanding ensemble acting in *Cocoon* was one of the year's major highlights. *Crimes of Passion* though remains my most vivid highlight. I was pleased to see the major critics note Ken Russell's serious intent with regards to the highly explosive content of the most thought-provoking fantasy to be seen for a long time. Video clip director Russell Mulcahy's debut feature *Razorback* was unusual and immaculately stylish. It certainly made me want to see what he could do with a more original, less hokey script. Which is precisely what

Never Ending Story, The



Red Sonja





Brazil



Brother from Another Planet, The



Care Bears Movie, The

George Miller's *Mad Max III: Beyond Thunderdome* was. This major work took a quantum leap forward in the further exploration of the myth surrounding everybody's favourite post-holocaust anti-hero. The poetry and dignity of the latest Max outing was fantasy cinema of the highest order and the quieter more human moments more than made up for the lack of action along the lines of *Mad Max 2*. The best and worst of Steven Spielberg, wearing his producer's hat, was encompassed in 1985. *Back to the Future* was a winning sure-fire crowd-pleaser combining affectionate accessible nostalgia with an enchanting time travel odyssey. *The Goonies* on the other hand was a crass, raucous comic-strip that made me head for the chemist in search of aspirin. All of Me was a *tour de force* by Steve Martin whose dual personality

Cat's Eye

problem had me in hysterics. And John Sayles' *The Brother From Another Planet* proved what an incisive and observant writer/director he is.

Well, that's the best dealt with. Or don't you agree? What about the mediocre. Sheena was certainly banal but I enjoyed every glossy soap-opera inspired second. 2010 on the other hand was just plain dull and, although it certainly contained the year's best special effects, was an insult to Kubrick's watershed original. *Lady Hawk* pleased the eye but was a lacklustre fairy tale which failed to ignite any enthusiasm or sympathy. And the same can be said of this year's James Bond outing *A View to a Kill*. What a relief Roger Moore has finally realised his premium Bond days are over. *Runaway* was an interesting concept ruined by Tom Selleck and ludicrous character motivation. *The Black Cauldron* was years in the making but hardly worth the wait. *King Solomon's Mines* was yet another remake of H. Rider Haggard's classic that would have been better left unmade. And despite high anticipation Ridley Scott's *Legend* turned out to be visually stunning but unfortunately saddled with the most vacuous plot imaginable.

The worst

Now for the worst of the year which I'll dispense with quickly as the memory of some of these turkeys is just too great to bear. *Scream for Help* was tacky and sleazebally enjoyable but definitely the worst directed film of the year. *Baby* was a disaster and the obviously fake rubber dinosaurs a joke. *The Never Ending Story* betrayed all the charm and sense of wonder



Pelle Rider



Body Double



Santa Claus the Movie



Friday the 13th: Part V: A New Beginning



A NIGHTMARE



Back to the Future



Sword of the Valiant



Gooses, The



Weird Science



Lady Hawk



2010



Return to Oz



C.H.U.D.



contained in Michael Ende's novel. Morons from Outer Space was unfunny, unpleasant and a million other 'uns thrown in for good measure. C.H.U.D. Could Have Unleashed Diarrhoea. Night of the Alien was the catchpenny retitling of Future Kill which could have just as easily been named Porkey's Revenge 2. Some found The Return of Captain Invincible hilarious. I didn't.

Titan Find turned out to be no find at all, just another Allen clone from the one-man industry in this area. Bill Malone. Cat's Eyes was the latest Stephen King adaptation to bite the dust. He should keep well away from Dino De Laurentiis but he never seems to learn, does he? For those of you who thought LifeForce was supposed to be intentionally funny, I can tell you it wasn't. Tobe Hooper was mortified by the over-hysterical reception to what he considered a traditional horror movie. Sword of the Valiant was another attempt by Stephen Weeks to remake the legend of "Gawain and the Green Knight". Let's hope he gives up soon. Red Sonia joins the elite group of other movies with red in the title that seems doomed to failure. (Red Dawn, Red Sun etc.) The Bride was two bad movies for the price of one. The Of Mice and Men section proved to be only marginally less dire than the Lady Caroline Lamb one. Weird Science was 'The Sun's' Page Three answer to Frankenstein. Element of Crime copied the pretentious bore of the year award. And the less said about Santa Claus The Movie and The Care Bears Movie, the better!

Last, but not least, were four films that blurred the edges and became borderline cases - the fantasy element being only of miniscule importance but integral all the

same. Consider the dark and gloomy western Pale Rider, the quite brilliant The Purple Rose of Cairo, the Kung-Fu disco musical The Last Dragon and John Boorman's affecting Amazonian epic, The Emerald Forest.

My Top Ten

If you had to choose a Top Ten, which would they be? Here's mine: Crimes of Passion, Back to the Future, Body Double, Mad Max III: Beyond Thunderdome, Repo Man, Night of the Comet, Brazil, Starman, Cocoon, The Terminator.

Best Director: Terry Gilliam for Brazil.

Best actor: Jeff Bridges for Starman.

Best actress: Kathleen Turner for Crimes of Passion.

The worst film: Santa Claus The Movie.

Nightmare on Elm Street, The



King Solomon's Mines



Cocoon



Have your say...

1985 Film Review

STARBURST

1985 Films in Alphabetical Order

1. All of Me
2. Baby
3. Back to the Future
4. Black Cauldron, The
5. Body Double
6. Brazil
7. Bride, The
8. Brother from Another Planet, The
9. Care Bears Movie, The
10. Cat's Eye
11. C.H.U.D.
12. Cocoon
13. Crimes of Passion
14. Death Warm'd Up
15. Element of Crime
16. Emerald Forest, The
17. Friday the 13th. Part V: A New Beginning
18. Ghoules
19. Goonies, The
20. King Solomon's Mines
21. Lady Hawke
22. Last Dragon, The
23. Legend
24. LifeForce
25. Mad Max III: Beyond Thunderdome
26. Morons from Outer Space
27. Never Ending Story, The
28. Night of the Alien
29. Night of the Comet
30. Nightmare on Elm Street, The
31. Pale Rider
32. Purple Rose of Cairo, The
33. Razorback
34. Red Sonja
35. Repo Man
36. Return of Captain Invincible, The
37. Return to Oz
38. Runaway
39. Santa Claus the Movie
40. Scream for Help
41. Sheena
42. Starman
43. Swordkill
44. Sword of the Valiant
45. Terminator, The
46. Titan Find
47. Trancers
48. 2010
49. View To A Kill, A
50. Weird Science

Here's your chance to have your say and let us and the film makers know what you liked and disliked most in the films of 1985

BEST

First choice

☐

Second choice

☐

Third choice

☐

Please insert film number in the appropriate box

WORST

☐

Name

Address

Any comments:

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in two issues time



THE BLACK ADDER



BY RICHARD MARSON

THERE is very little originality in the field of comedy these days – and still less in the field of fantastic comedy where reality is only alluded to, and where the action of the series revolves around a uniquely 'different' set of characters and situations. Most television comedy is of the sickeningly twee Terry and June nature and imaginative comic fantasy on the lines of *Knave* and *The Hitch Hiker's Guide To The Galaxy* is few and far between. About two years ago, the BBC launched one of their sporadic and most successful attempts to bridge this creative void under the title of *The Black Adder*. Ostensibly a show designed to showcase the potential of its star Rowan Atkinson, it covered an area of the sword and sorcery genre rarely touched upon – its comic overtones. The series followed an imaginary history of England concerning the corrupt royal family of medieval infamy, whose prime schemer is of course the Atkinson character, Edmund. The show

followed his attempts to win the succession for himself, as well as his desperate efforts to establish himself as a truly evil legend.

To be perfectly honest, the first series of six episodes was patchy – it worked only sporadically, with rather too much reliance on Atkinson's incredible facial range as well as a considerable amount of relatively juvenile histrionics. That said, it was also a breath of fresh air and its very blunt form of humour as well as its anachronistic historical setting appealed to a huge audience. It had used every opportunity to experiment with the traditional BBC presentation of comedy and it was no coincidence that the producer, John Lloyd, had also worked on *Not The Nine O'Clock News* and *Hitch Hiker's*. The series was given a hefty budget which is something of a rarity for any television comedy and this was rapidly eaten up by extensive location filming in Northumberland, massive studio sets, accurate down to the last period detail and the use of actors like Brian Blessed.

The series ended with Edmund's ex-cruciating death on a machine that was

designed to rip its victim into little pieces, and with the rest of the cast poisoned in one fell swoop. This blood-bath conclusion not surprisingly drew speculation as to whether there would ever be another series. In view of the expense of the show it was largely thought that *Black Adder* had had its day. The BBC, it seemed, wanted to go back to more traditional comedy. However, John Lloyd and Atkinson himself were not willing to end the concept there. Believing the show had more mileage in it, Lloyd took proposals for a second season to the programme chiefs. Eventually agreement was reached when *The Black Adder* team agreed to make the second series considerably cheaper than the first. This time around there was to be only one day's location filming for the whole series, mostly comprising the opening titles. Lloyd also agreed to make the show in front of a studio audience once a week for the six-week recording schedule, instead of showing the finished episodes to a preview audience and adding their laughter onto the soundtrack as had been the case before.

To direct the series, Lloyd elected to commission a new recruit to the BBC's comedy output, Mandie Fletcher, who had some eight years of experience in the theatre behind her and who had just finished the first highly successful run of the *Three Up, Two Down* sitcom. The scripts for the second series were to be written by Richard Curtis and Ben Elton, with Atkinson released from the writing side because Lloyd felt it placed too much strain on the star. Curtis had co-written the first series with Atkinson, and he had been writing material for *Not The Nine O'Clock News* as well as Atkinson's world tour for some time before. Elton was brought in by Lloyd, who admired his suitably dynamic and different work on the anarchic *Young Ones* show. However, all was not to be plain sailing and there were a considerable number of problems that beset the team before work finally began.

A Nerd Free Day

The first of these problems was fitting the commitments of the original cast around the projected recording dates envisaged by the BBC. Atkinson was busy in the theatre, appearing in *The Nerd*, but this was no problem as rehearsals took place in the day and recordings would only take place on Sundays – Atkinson's one free day from *The Nerd*. Unfortunately, though, it proved impossible to include Brian Blessed in the new series, because he was abroad filming *Treasure Island* for ITV. The main problem came in the whole approach to the follow-up. Did they set it directly after the events of the last series or did they leave Edmund dead along with the rest of his family and try something else? Eventually it was decided



that to go back to the original would be a creative mistake and that the best idea would be to update the proceedings to Elizabethan times with Atkinson playing the first Edmund's descendant, blessed with the same name as well as the same incompetent side-kicks, Percy and Baldrick. As a result, the same kind of theme could be pursued without the new series being totally dissimilar to the last season.

As usual the writers are pushing to get away with as much as they can within the bounds of bad taste, something especially apparent at the end of the episode called *Beer*. To tone down any possible excesses, there is a producer's run at rehearsal as well as a performance for the head of the comedy department Gareth Gwenlan whose head will be on the block if the show does cause any outrage. Joining the regular cast of the second series is up and coming actress Miranda Richardson, fresh from her success in the film *Dance With A Stranger* and chosen for the part because of her performance in the Ruth Ellis part. As with the first series, there is a plethora of guest stars in the series, which has been titled *Blackadder 2*. These are chosen in a sort of collusion between producer and director and include such names as Rik Mayall, Tom Baker, Miriam Margolyes and others too numerous to mention. I asked Mandie Fletcher whether the cast and crew got bored with the material in rehearsal. "It's tough but you do get whipped along with it. We only rehearse for six days and it's very exciting to do. It's a bit like doing Shakespeare in front of an audience – it's not at all like doing sitcom. Indeed, it's given me a lot more scope than normal sitcom where people usually sit down in cosy sitting rooms and so on."

"With *Blackadder 2* the designer went overboard on the Elizabethan designs and created the most beautiful sets, which, because they're small are also cheap – unlike the baronial halls of the first series. I shoot the whole thing more in a drama way and I've tried to get it as beautiful, pictorially, as possible, because then all the words go against that. The jarring of images, ancient and modern, straight stuff with satire is definitely part of the series' appeal as we read it."

No Camping It Up

Whereas the original series was weakened somewhat by a tendency to rely on Atkinson's facial ability this has been resisted with series two. This was a very clear aim of Mandie Fletcher: "I wanted to move on from all that undergraduate camping it up. I run the rehearsals on a democratic basis – more so than I've ever done before, normally a director is much more in control. Of course a lot of the actor's ideas I do have to over-rule but I found I got an

awful lot of bright ideas from the cast and it was a case of moulding those together. Rowan takes it all very seriously, for example, which is really the only way to do it."

Ironically the one-day's filming at the picturesque Wilton House in Wiltshire has been lost through pressure of time: "We had a beautifully sunny day and this film was a very funny piece of the episode. Unfortunately it wasn't particularly essential and when we ran over our time we had to cut it."

Keep Them Laughing

Mandie Fletcher and her team had about six weeks pre-production, during which time all the casting was accomplished and the visuals of the thing were discussed. I asked her whether it was a problem working at such a pace, particularly as all the editing for the show had to be done as the studio recording is in progression. "No, not really. You go right from the very concept and work your direction around the set designs as a rule. There's no point being dogmatic about it, and going into it saying 'this is how I am going to shoot this, like it or lump it'. That means that you can't change the blocking in rehearsal and everything just gets terribly stilted and frustrating for the actors. I did my camera scripts on the Thursday before the Sunday recording and that's fairly late in the day – especially when that camera script wasn't printed until the day before recording. Even then I would change things if I found a better way of doing it. Editing as we go along just needs care. We ran through each episode at five o'clock on the recording day and then started the tape at eight. The post production will only take about a week, and that's mainly there for us to soup up explosions a bit and make them sound more spectacular as well as to add things like seagulls crying in the background of the episode set on board the ship."

The presence of the studio audience in something like *Blackadder 2* must have acted as a distraction: "Not to me because I quickly became too immersed in what I was doing, whereas some actors respond to it and raise their performance as a result. It caused problems in two areas – one was with explosions, which obviously take time and bore the general public if they take too long and worst of all, costume changes. The costumes in the show are very elaborate but I felt I could only allow ten minutes off the studio floor for changes. It was a struggle not to compromise the look of the thing with the patience of our audience. We have this thing called a warm up, which is basically a comedian linking the takes with a few jokes and so on to get the audience going and to make them receptive. We also show bits of other comedy shows to fill in the gaps and keep them laughing."

Blackadder 2 will probably not be transmitted in the order it was recorded, a drawback of the first series which had a running theme. The usual practice is to select the best episodes and put them out first and last so that the series arrives and concludes successfully. This can be done only if there isn't a running strand to the plot, and *Blackadder 2*'s stories are all self-contained.

The music was a highly distinctive part of the first series and the same theme has been arranged by its composer Howard Goodall on a recorder to give a suitably Elizabethan flavour to the sequel. It is likely, however, that this will be the last series of *Blackadder*, for reasons which the star himself explains: "We felt there was mileage to be exploited in doing another series but to do yet another smacks to me of the American way where successful, fresh concepts and ideas are taken and ruthlessly exploited until there's nothing left. It's far better to do a few and leave well alone after that – progress to the next thing. I think we really wanted to do this second series to make some of the failings of the first series into strengths and also because there was enough life still in the storyline to make it worthwhile. Edmund's the great loser, but this time he's not quite such a fool, he does get out of things in the end."

A Strong Element of Corruption

The series was completed after six weeks recording in the summer of 1985, and it may well be the last series of this genre for some time. During the course of the storyline, Edmund comes up against everything you might expect of Elizabethan situations from a puritanical Aunt and Uncle, through to debt collecting Bishops with well developed tastes for ladies of ill-repute as well as court intrigues and a strong element of corruption. The definite plus of the second series from what I've seen is that it's far more consistent and the fact that it's all been recorded in the studio actually helps. The original film-based series didn't seem to fit very easily into its own self-prescribed slot, whereas the less ambitious production of the second allows a greater concentration on performances and the actual lines of the script. The guest star policy works well too, although it is an unsurprising temptation for the visiting actors' to steal some of Atkinson's thunder by going rather over the top. Edmund's image is very different in the new series too – now he is almost dapper, with a suave beard and costume replacing the hideous pudding basin haircut and hunchback suit of before.

With an audience appeal built in by the repeat of the first series, *Blackadder 2* is certain to succeed as it deserves, imbued as it is with an originality and consistency rare in television today.





P R E V I E W

HERE's the first of a new column designed to fill you in on what's happening in the fantasy cinema. Through it, I hope to concisely steer you towards the good, tip you off about the bad and just generally moan about the ugly blots on the horizon of which there were more than a fair share in 1985. Happily, neither of the latter apply to the first quartet of new films I'll be dealing with.

Demons

And how appropriate it is for me to start the New Year off with my favourite genre director - Dario Argento. Regular readers of *Starburst* were surprised to read my condemnation of his last film *Phenomena*. This goes to prove how uncertain the film business is and how terrifying the burden can be in naming a preference. Usually people expect a certain amount of favourably biased critical leeway to enter in these cases - something I hope I have never been guilty of. A bad film is a bad film no matter who it's made by. I've since discussed the merits of *Phenomena* with Argento - he feels it's the best film he's ever made by the way - but no matter how persuasive his theories are, I still remain unconvinced. So it's good to report that he's back on top form with *Demons* (Italian title: *Demoni*), a film he co-wrote and produced for his close friend and associate Lamberto Bava. *Demons* is the second film to be made under Argento's newly formed DAC Films banner and although he may not have directed it, to all intents and purposes it is an Argento film through and through. As fit by Gianroberto Battaglia it looks like vintage Argento in a style reminiscent of *Suspense*, and Claudio Simonetti's pulsating music interspersed with recent chart hits underscores the other



DEMONS: A Demon puts an end to a clandestine love affair

similarities. Argento's creative input elevates Bava's rocky career to a pinnacle that the director should have reached before now on the basis of his much maligned promising debut feature, *Macabre*.

Demons is a lightning-paced, intense non-stop gore-feast based around a deceptively simple but quite brilliant premise: *The Evil Dead* meets *The Purple Rose of Cairo* as two girls studying music in Berlin are given free tickets to a film preview by an ominous looking man in a Terminator inspired mask. Arriving at a run down cinema called *The Metropol* that night, the girls take their seats in the sparsely populated auditorium peppered with patrons from all walks of life. There's a teenage

couple on a first date and a blind man whose attractive wife seizes this chance to rendezvous with her lover. There's also a pimp with his two employees on a night off, a middle-aged couple on a cheap anniversary celebration and two Jocks after whatever they can get. As the lights go down, a horror movie unspools on-screen concerning the discovery of the tomb of Nostradamus and the subsequent release of a terrifying demonic force. As this occurs, one of the prostitutes who has scratched her face on a replica of the Nostradamus death mask used on a display stand in the lobby undergoes a gruesome transformation. She in turn contaminates her friend who tries to

DEMONS: A Demon bursts out of a victim's back



Presented
by
Alan Jones



RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD: Tina (Beverly Randolph) with her boyfriend Freddy (Thom Mathews) who is about to join the living dead

escape by clawing her way through the screen on which a similar murder is being played out. At this point all hell breaks loose in the theatre. The entrances and exits have all been mysteriously sealed off and each unprepared disbelieving member of the selected audience faces a battle with forces they don't understand and an ever growing army of demonic zombies drawn from their own ranks.

Demons is full of grisly inventive deaths, shock twists and turns, visual references to both *Argento* and *Bava's* auspicious heritage and telling statements about the relationship between cinematic violence and the audience it so often panders to. Even anti-censorship lobbyists will be squirming in their seats with regards to the latter. The masterpiece here, of course, is in using an actual cinema environment. Its double-take element allows *Argento* and *Bava* free rein to delve into every movie-buffs collective subconscious and mine every paranoid fear for all it's worth. Sitting in the balcony will never be the same again!

The actors, all virtual unknowns, include *Argento's* daughter Fore

who has a remarkable sequence where she tries to escape the confines of the cinema by crawling through an air-conditioning duct. To say more would ruin this bravura moment of stylish fantasy that elevates *Demons* to a level rarely achieved by the Italian horror genre outside of *Argento's* own work.

The true star of *Demons* though is make-up newcomer, Sergio Stivaletti. His disturbing effects – over 500 of them – incredibly outdo even Tom Savini's best work. Nowhere is Stivaletti's craft more potent than in one scene where a demon bursts out of a victim's back and another when a helicopter crashes through the cinema roof – its blades used to ward off the approaching onslaught of walking dead.

There are some questionable moments in *Demons* – one where a punk girl has cocaine scraped off her breasts with a razor-blade is perhaps the most startling – but all in all I haven't seen a horror film of this high calibre or impact in ages. *Demons* has a resonance far beyond your average gorehound's delight – something I hope our censor will appreciate. Otherwise I wouldn't like to hazard a

guess at how badly it will suffer under his scissoring.

The phenomenal success of *Demons* at the Italian box-office means that a sequel is already in pre-production. Personally, I'm counting the days!

The Return of the Living Dead

More gore, but in a lighter vein comes courtesy of *The Return of the Living Dead*, Dan O'Bannon's impressive sequel of sorts to

George Romero's watershed *Night of the Living Dead*. O'Bannon has always been a script-writer of considerable merit and now he proves himself a talent to be reckoned with on the directing side as well. *The Return of the Living Dead* concerns the macabre happenings at the Unedea Medical Supply warehouse in Louisville, Kentucky. A cannister containing a victim from the military cover-up operation as featured in the final moments of *Night of the Living Dead* breaks open and releases a noxious gas into the atmosphere that re-animates a cadaver in the freezer.

The delightfully panic-stricken workers try to hook the corpse to pieces but when that fails they decide to create the still writhing body parts of the neighbouring morgue. But the smoke from the chimney combines with a rainstorm and the deadly residue settles on the local cemetery where a punk party is in full swing causing the zombie hordes to rise and go on the rampage for sustenance – live brains!

Opening with the irrelevant admonition "The events portrayed in this film are all true. The names are real names of real people and real organisations", *The Return of the Living Dead* is a hilarious, tension-

RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD





RE-ANIMATOR: The headless evil Doctor Carl Hill (David Gale)

filled put-on that dovetails gore and humour perfectly as it races along to a tongue-in-cheek climax. O'Bannon's sly homage to E.C. comics is lunatic and refreshingly shocking in its redefinition of popular zombie mythology. The zombies here are smart; they move fast; and they hold intelligent conversations in the effort to sink their rotting teeth into various living craniums. The action is superb, especially by James Karen as a nightwatchman suffering from living rigor-mortis, but a special mention must go to Linnea Quigley who handles the unrewarding task of being entirely naked throughout with a relish that must have been difficult to maintain under the circumstances.

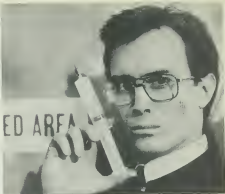
Aside from an inadequate score, which mixes pseudo-HI-NRG and tracks from various Underground groups, and a few luffed make-up effects by Bill Munn, *The Return of the Living Dead* is an unmissable treasure that is better than anyone really had a right to expect. "Send more paramedics!" indeed.

Re-Animator

Even more gore and re-animation is contained in Stuart Gordon's grisly *Re-Animator*, a trashy, over-the-top exercise in appalling, but intentional, bad taste. Gordon's debut feature is an adaptation of H.P. Lovecraft's first series of stories called "Herbert West - The Re-Animator" originally written for the obscure publication "Home Brew". Lovecraft made it very well known that the short stories were written purely for the money and that he wasn't particularly proud of them. How fitting then that Charles Band's Empire Pictures should turn them into an all-stops-out exploitation horror gem. Basically *Re-Animator* is about Herbert West, a crazed scientist, who invents a luminescent serum with the ability to bring the dead back to life. The problem being that the revived corpses only have one thing on their minds - blood lust and gut-ripping murder. All this takes place in a Massachusetts University in Arkham where an evil doctor wants

to steal the serum - is decapitated and re-animated, and headless - plots a revenge that involves the Dean of the college, his daughter, and her boy friend - West's roommate and accomplice in his bizarre experiments.

It's easy to see why *Re-Animator* has attracted so much critical attention and showings in various film festivals, our own London one included. This enjoyably off-beat film is sleazily perverse in tone and so outrageously dubious that one can only applaud Gordon for actu-



RE-ANIMATOR: Crazed Herbert West (Jeffrey Combs)

ally pulling it off. The basic grimness is off-set by a witty script, crammed with hilarious one-liners, and acceptable bad acting which relegates the stomach-churning gore-drenched effects to the level of high amusement rather than disgust. Although reminiscent of 1970's A.L.P. schlock, the only other film I can think of which had a similar mix of bracker than black comedy and gross-out gore is Joel Reed's extraordinary *Bloodsucking Freaks*. Like that, *Re-Animator* is one sick movie to be sure. But

this is the one that the censor has allowed you to see - albeit with minor cuts - because it is impossible to take seriously. Except by film festivals of course!

Black Moon Rising

No gore at all - just a little hard-edged violence - is contained in *Black Moon Rising*, Harley Cockles' hi-tech thriller with science-fiction overtones. New World Pictures could well have a moderate hit on their hands with this film culled from an old dusted-off John Car-

BLACK MOON RISING: Supercool Linda Hamilton as Nine, a master car thief





penier script. The Black Moon of the title is a space-age super car – the brainchild of three Texans – that runs on a hydrogen fuel distilled from tap water. No sooner do the three inventors arrive in Los Angeles hoping to make their fortune when the car is promptly stolen by a very sophisticated ring of car thieves. But the Texans aren't the only ones who want the prototype back. Quint, a 'professional' thief working for the Government has hidden a computer cassette containing damning tax evidence under the numberplate. So Quint and the Texans, pursued by hit men after the tax records, are forced into a daring high-risk raid on the car thieves' impenetrable fortress.

Black Moon Rising is never quite as exciting as perhaps it should be in the early stages but this is more than made up in the final ingenious assault on the crooks' operations centre climaxing with the Black Moon leaping between the tops of two downtown L.A. skyscrapers. Cockles has crafted a likeable and unpretentious, solid action adventure thankfully devoid of too much flashiness, meaning the unusual story stays clearly defined throughout rather than getting swamped in distracting style. The intriguingly top-notch cast help enormously in

this respect too. Tommy Lee Jones, looking more the worse for wear as he gets older, is perfectly cast as the cynical Quint. His gift is making sure you believe in everything he does. And fantasy favourite Linda Hamilton is the ideal foil as the villainess with a heart. She gives *Black Moon Rising* that extra touch of class.

DEMONS – Produced by Dario Argento. Directed by Lamberto Bava. Starring Natesha Hovey, Urbano Barberini, Bobby Rhodes and Fiore Argento. 95 mins.

THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD – Produced by Tom Fox. Directed by Dan O'Bannon. Starring Clu Gulager, James Karen, Don Calfa, Linnea Quigley. 91 mins.

RE-ANIMATOR – Produced by Brian Yuzna. Directed by Stuart Gordon. Starring Jeffrey Combs, Bruce Abbott, Barbara Crampton, David Gale. 86 mins.

BLACK MOON RISING – Produced by Joel B. Michaels and Douglas Curtis. Directed by Harley Cockles. Starring Tommy Lee Jones, Linda Hamilton, Robert Vaughn, Keenan Wynn, Richard Jaeckel, Lee Ving. 95 mins.



Robert Vaughn, another car thief, and "friends"

BLACK MOON RISING: The super car, The Black Moon



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John Taylor silently plays "The Hacker"

TIMESLIP

Reviewed by Timothy Robins

"I knew there was a password to the future - I knew it was just a matter of time before I found it..."

A DISEMBODIED voice purporting to be that of Duran Duran's John Taylor (but in fact belonging to uncredited Chris Berry of *Splitting Image*) talks over the bass guitarist's British television, acting debut in the title sequence of *Timeslip*: the Yorkshire Television - Callender Company, science fiction co-production networked by ITV on the 28th of December, 1985. If you blinked you may have missed it or even the programme itself which was slipped inconspicuously between 11.35 and 12.05 in the evening, following a compilation of *Splitting Image* repeats.

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For those who blinked, Taylor played, or posed, as The Hacker, a computer whizz-kid who writes a program that slips Time and enables him to look into the future. What The Hacker saw on his VDU was 'The Block', the pilot for an intended anthology of science fiction stories that was to be shown under the umbrella title of *Timeslip*. Now it looks as if the series will not be made, so *Timeslip* - 'The Block' has been left to stand on its own as a rather unusual contribution to the field of television science fiction.

Basically, *Timeslip* was a tale of love among the micro processors. The year is

2035 and Margaret Thatcher's 'wired society' has arrived with a vengeance. Computers do most of the work whilst the unemployed run riot in the streets. The Hacker's VDU registers 'Civil Disturbance' and our first glimpse of the future is of an armour-plated taxi, enveloped in flames, careering into an underground car park to be greeted by a doorman in full riot gear.

However, despite first appearances, *Timeslip* did not tread the path of post-industrial mayhem already well-worn by rock/pop videos, the Mad Max films and TV's own *Max Headroom* (whose pilot was re-shown the previous evening). Instead techno-punk was replaced by computer-chic.

The occupant of the battle-worn taxi is one Greg Shanklin, played by the well-chiselled American hunk, Jeff Harding (whose British television appearances include *We'll Meet Again*, *Solo*, and *Lytton's Diary*). Greg is a credit controller for an international credit company, Interscan. He works in a vast tower-block run by a central computer system. Max 178, Max provides a variety of obnoxious computer personalities cast in the now familiar mould of *Hitch Hiker's*





A meeting against the rules for Greg and Jenny

Guide to the Galaxy. These include 'Billy' (the voice of Blain Fairman), a lift program which exhorts you to "Have a nice once", 'Lee' (Manning Redwood) the 'heavy' security program and 'Cindy' (Liz Ross) the credit program which does most of Greg's work.

Of course, these computer personalities are no substitute for the real thing. Despite company rules forbidding personal relationships between employees, Greg is having an affair with Jenny, an assistant to another controller. And who can blame him? Jenny is played by the sultry Australian actress Virginia Hey (who, you may recall, was a warrior woman in *Mad Max II*).

Soft Focus Sex

To escape the prying eyes of the company computers, Greg and Jenny go 'off line' by getting 'Cindy' to wipe their identities from big Max's memory. Greg warns 'Cindy' not to interrupt him unless it's a matter of life or death, then slinks up to the executive suite for twenty seconds worth of soft focus sex with Jenny. It was this scene that got *Timeslip* its late timeslot and its billing

by Yorkshire Television as a "futuristic adult thriller". This was a bit confusing as John Taylor's cameo coupled with pre-publicity in 'Look In' – the junior TV Times – gave the impression that *Timeslip* was aimed at children. Indeed *Timeslip* is also the title of a 1970's children's science fiction series made by ATV. Presumably it was hoped that young Durannies would turn off after the title sequence. In the event the confusion suggests the producers were uncertain of what kind of audience *Timeslip* was intended for – a recipe for disaster.

For Gregg and Jenny the trouble starts when night falls. The security system swings into action and, with no memory of their identities, it assumes they are intruders. 'Lee' orders Greg and Jenny down to the detention suite. Greg tries to deactivate the computer by tampering with its junction box, conveniently situated in the fire escape. The computer tries to deactivate Greg with 4000 volts of electricity. When Greg attacks the system with the blunt end of a fire extinguisher the computer creates a 'total Block Vacuum'. Greg and Jenny face suffocation when Greg's personal computer 'Cindy' saves

the day by shutting down the security system. Like Greg you may ask why 'Cindy' didn't do this earlier. Well he did leave instructions not to be interrupted unless it was a matter of life or death.

Jenny seems nearer death than life – although through the whole adventure she's done little more than fall over and apologise. She asks Greg to take her down to 'Resource'. Here she is bathed in restorative light. As Greg goes back to his office 'Billy' the lift passes on a reprimand. He must stop fooling around with the company robotic secretarial assistant modules. This easily missed reference to Greg's act of technophilia provides the story's second plot twist. The voice of *The Hacker* reminds you of the first "Greg has forgotten one simple rule, computers are like children – the smarter they get the more careful you have to be about what you say in front of them..."

One Nail-Biting Moment

It has to be said that the plot was not one of *Timeslip*'s strong points. Written by Jim Hawkins, the script was based on a four-page treatment by Robert Holmes whose witty characterisations and satirical stories have enlivened many an episode of *Doctor Who*. Obviously his talents were not needed here for the emphasis was firmly on the visuals and it is here the programme's success and failure lay.

Timeslip tried to combine television science fiction drama with the high energy, high tech world of rock/pop videos and the commercial sci-fi chic currently found selling everything from fizzy drinks to cassette tapes. Producer, Colin Callender (whose previous work for television includes Channel Four's prestigious production of *Nicholas Nickleby*), brought in commercial director Will Paterson to provide the kind of slickness seen in those adverts that feature large rooms decked out with venetian blinds, ebony desks and white ceramic busts wearing headphones – all of which were in evidence here. Accompanying the pictures was Paul Hart's especially composed music score which ranged from up beat electro pop to film noir sax. For their part, performers Harding and Hey smoothed about impressively designed sets like mobile models from the pages of 'Vogue'.

The trouble was it all worked too well. As visually interesting as adverts and pop videos are they are not renowned for their blinding originality when it comes to plot and characterisation. Given their limited time – minutes in the case of videos, seconds in the case of ads – all rely on stereotyped images that have been thoroughly digested by popular culture and that rarely stray far from a clichéd set of parameters. *Timeslip* proved no exception. The plot drew heavily on stock characters and situations recognisable from a host of contemporary sources – not least *Blade Runner* and *Brazil*.

It was difficult to work up any sympathy for the characters and the glossy magazine look robbed the piece of any real drama. The one nail-biting moment came when Greg and Jenny run to the safety of a lift.



The Hacker (John Taylor)

The lift doors open to reveal an empty lift shaft. As the block's depressurisation almost sucks Greg and Jenny down it they are beset by swirling paper and a giant metal drum. However, all I could think of at the time was a Maxwell advert.

Frankly the computer didn't need to create a vacuum – the script was vacuous enough to suffocate an entire planet. Admittedly Jenny was only a robot but she uttered some of the most banal dialogue imaginable: "Reality isn't in here with your electronic slaves – it's out there, no work,

on the streets". On the other hand the sparseness of the dialogue was a welcome change from those stagey BBC SF dramas where the inability to afford physical action leads to an over reliance on verbal action and conflict is portrayed as shouting. All too often British television drama is indistinguishable from radio drama – when the action should start the talking begins, and continues until every plot point has been covered, every situation described, every conflict discussed from every angle and the performers have talked themselves hoarse.

Fast-Paced Commercial Sickness

In contrast *Timeslip* had a cinematic quality where worlds of meaning and much background information were conveyed in a single image. The programme's ability to do this was obviously helped by a high budget. And as an exercise in style it worked well. The tower block interiors were impressively designed and were only let down by the scenes in the fire escape. These look as if they were filmed at a multi-storey car park (all location work was done around Leeds and Bradford airport). Certainly the programme was far removed from the low budget stigma that

plagues so much British television SF and there's no question that productions like *Doctor Who* would benefit from a similar injection of fast-paced, commercial slickness – or even just the money.

Science fiction never comes cheap and *Timeslip* bore the indelible stamp of US pre-sale. In fact the programme was screened first in the States on Home Box Office, but with American series like *Amazing Stories* proving too expensive for British television to buy even a home-grown product is more than welcome. Unfortunately budget and the complexities of co-production seem to have doomed the *Timeslip* series before the pilot was even shown (and that was made a year ago). The Callender Company say they have three more scripts waiting to go into production but Yorkshire Television are playing the anthology aspect down.

If a series does go ahead (and I hope it does) it would be nice if as much attention were paid to the script as the decor. As it was the need for pre-sale coupled with a conscious attempt to make the programme indistinguishable from the commercials that surrounded it, left its mark. My impression of *Timeslip* was akin to watching a thirty minute ad for a compact disk – visually enticing but all it was saying was "buy me".

Greg and Jenny, still not realising their danger



A look *Back to the Future* classics?



COMPUTER EFFECTS

With the increasing sophistication of computer animation beyond two-dimensional imagery into 'realistic' representations, its use in feature films opens up fascinating possibilities. Disney's TRON was a significant signpost, but there's more in The Works.

A child in the Thirties would wait in eager anticipation for the next instalment of Flash Gordon's adventure. Although these early science-fiction films now have a charm all of their own, they no longer stir up the same excitement in today's younger audience. Audiences have been brought up on a diet of *Star Wars* and *TRON* (not to mention real adventures in space and on the moon), and are liable to find the special effects in programmes like

tion of glowing green lines, as was the brief screen display of the landscape of an alien planetoid in *Allen* five years earlier. There are even examples of directors asking for the hidden lines to be put back into a computer visualisation so that the picture is more obviously a computer image. These include George Lucas, referring to the 'blueprint' views of the trench around the Death Star in *Star Wars*. The images were used on the consoles of the pilots' vehicles to show the target of the heroes' missiles.

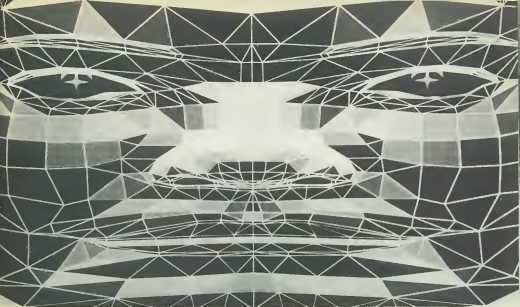
The first application of computer graphics in feature films was in *Westworld*, produced in 1977 and featuring a robot gunman (played by Yul Brynner) whose eyesight took the form of a mosaic of 'quantized' (discrete, proportional units) patterns. The sequences were, at the time they were produced, an effective, dramatic and visually stimulating representation of the way a robot sees. This idea is now a familiar video effect, often seen on television and posters, although it is by no means as hackneyed as the wireframe grid of glowing green lines. The resulting large squares of colour were enough to provide a recognisable image of a previously known object, especially when the object moved.

Gary Demos and John Whitney Jr, the

Flash Gordon amusing rather than convincing. This is not to say that *Flash Gordon* did not appear realistic to the audiences in the Thirties, just that expectations have changed. To quench the seemingly never-ending thirst for realistic, action-packed adventures, it is increasingly becoming the task of the computer animator to produce spectacular and, above all, believable special effects. This has led to such films as *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* and *Superman*. Even Walt Disney Productions largely abandoned conventional cartoon animation to make *TRON*, the film which to date makes the most use of computer graphics.

Computer graphics were introduced into feature films slowly and cautiously. In the Seventies, the era of the vector display (internal screen revealing the course of an aircraft or spaceship, and the size and direction of objects in its flight path), practically no feature film producer took advantage of this relatively cheap and adaptable technology which could give a stylish, high-tech look. In the Eighties, with so many more variations available, the wireframe display still suits the imagination of directors. Superman's body was analysed by the computer in *Superman III* as a configura-





son of the computer graphics pioneer, were responsible for this achievement (John Whitney Sr was an experimental filmmaker, but also directed films for United Productions of America [UPA] – a group of independent film animators who broke away from Walt Disney – and worked on the title sequences for Hitchcock's *Vertigo*). Along with Richard Taylor, they soon became key figures in the Entertainment Technology Group of Information International Inc. (Triple I). Their influence was particularly important at this stage since there was a great resistance among feature film professionals to the idea that computer graphics could be 'realistic'. With the powerful Cray computers, Demos and Whitney demonstrated that computer-generated images could approach the realism of photographs.

On the whole though, computer graphics in feature films has been contained within the confines of an 'alien viewscreen' or an 'X-wing fighter pilot's console' or some other device which separates graphic images from human actors with a clear border around the graphic image. The Death Star of *Star Wars* has already been mentioned. There were increasingly sophisticated views of the Death Star in *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*.

Return of the Jedi brought the alien viewscreen into three dimensions with a 'computer-controlled hologram projector', which is used by the rebel space fighters to plan their attack on the Death Star. The actors appear to surround a large green globe, representing the Forest Moon of Endor, with a partially constructed red Death Star orbiting it and protected by an energy field emanating from the moon. The Moon of Endor, the Death Star and the force field in this sequence were given some solidity by a number of fast, swirling dots mapped on to their surfaces. These gave a

'swimming' but credible actuality to the translucent shapes.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

When feature filmmakers were satisfied with the images computers could produce on futuristic screens and instrument panels, the next step was to use the computer image for special effects: to help characters materialise and dematerialise, fire lasers glow or explode. Triple I again led the way with the materialisation of Samurai warriors in *Futureworld*. A still photograph of the warriors was digitized (data represented as digits or in discrete forms) as geometric patterns on the Visual Display Unit. Each point in the pattern could be used to generate a geometric shape; a few dozen points were chosen and became foci for triangles which diminished in size, became more numerous and returned to the simple live action image. A form of computer visual enhancement was then used so that the warriors could be placed in a real background. Instead of relying on optical techniques in which the foreground character is filmed in (normally blue) limbo, Triple I averaged the information in two scenes, one with Samurai and one without, and the computer recorded the differences – the Samurai in various stages of their materialisation. The Samurai could then be inserted back into the landscape when holes of the right size and shape were electronically cut into the background image.

The still-scan effect, which can simulate a high-speed journey or a radiance of coloured lines around a central object, was first created manually for the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Since then several companies producing television commercials have made great use of it. One of the most interesting examples was for the film,

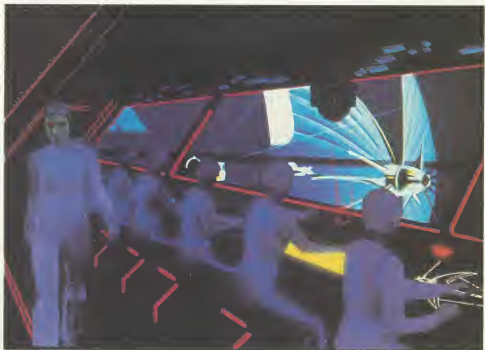
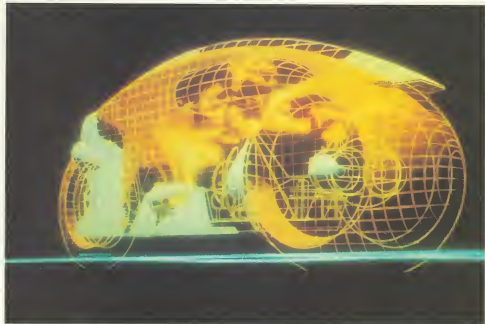
Demon Seed, using Scanimate at Image West. Using this technique, it was possible to appear to zoom through space and to give the triangular image used for the film's emotional computer a pulsating halo of streaks, varied to express moods from anger to ecstasy. The same system was used to create force fields, laser blasts and glowing vehicles for *Logan's Run*.

COMPUTER-GENERATED VEHICLES

Computer graphics began to affect feature films more radically when applied to the creation of vehicles rather than glowing lines around them. Up until this point, science fiction and adventure films had relied on the model maker's art for their more spectacular journeys, crashes and chases. It is now possible to do away with the physical model completely. A computer may hold a representation (a model) of the object internally and produce views of this model on its screen, or directly onto film, as required.

Perhaps the best showcase of computer graphics for general consumption is found in *TRON* (1981) directed by Stephen Lisberger. In a largely computer-generated environment, a number of computer-generated vehicles demonstrate a variety of computer graphics techniques. Several different computer graphics companies were involved in the making of *TRON*. They include MAGI (Synthvision, Robert Abel and Associates, Digital Effects Inc. and Triple I).

The computer-generated vehicles in the film were produced by MAGI (Mathematical Applications Group Inc.) and Triple I. MAGI used constructive solid geometry to create models for the 'tanks', 'recognisers' and 'light cycles', whereas Triple I digitized imaginary vehicles to produce the 'solar sailor'



and 'Sark's battle craft'. Since making **TRON**, MAGI have developed a system called Synhamation, which is said to be able to produce in two months what took ten months for **TRON**. MAGI's first contribution in the chronological order of the film's story is the materialisation, or 'rezzing up' in **TRON** jargon, of the 'light cycle' – a motor cycle with fixed spheres for wheels and a cockpit completely enclosing the rider. The process of rezzing up illustrates the stages in designing an object as well as the increasingly complex ways in which the model may be rendered: wireframe grid, then solids modelled and hidden surfaces removed, then light sources and texture. MAGI's basic shapes system is simple compared with Triple I's digitized co-ordinates, but the scene in which the light cycles race in zig-zags across an apparently vast arena (winning by blocking the opponent's exit) was the result of one of the most complex programs ever written for computer graphics – although the light cycle had no discrete moving parts during operation.

In the eight minutes of **TRON** designed by MAGI, two other types of vehicle, apart from the 'light cycle', appear – low-slung tanks with enormously long barrels, and machines, called 'recognizers', which look like flying gannets with two menacing legs. When these were wrecked the basic shapes system came into its own – the primitive shapes used to model them flew apart in spectacular fashion.

In **TRON**, the combination of live and computer-drawn characters was achieved by filming actors on sets with reference points whose positions could be used by the computer to check the orientation of a scene before generating a background for it. MAGI's subsequent work with Disney has involved combination of hand-animated characters with computer environments, building on the animation strengths of both man and machine.

The advantages of the MAGI system for the filmmakers was that it could operate quickly and flexibly. Triple I contributed the detailed, fully-realised vehicles which appear at the end of the film and move in a more stately and restrained fashion. One of the most memorable of these is a kind of aerial aircraft carrier which takes the villainous Sark towards his evil leader, the Master Control Program. A point line scanner exposed each frame, in which the carrier appeared, three times – in red, blue and green. To build up solid shapes and subtle colours, the scanner required up to 30 minutes for a single frame of film – at normal projection rates, one second of film requires 25 such frames. Therefore Richard Taylor, who directed the computer graphics, decreed that five minutes per frame had to be the average. Even so, Triple I's six minutes of film took 49 days of continuous filming to produce.

Perhaps the most elaborate vehicles in computer graphics come from NYIT's Computer Graphics Laboratory founded and funded by Alexander Schure and directed by his son Louis. Their unfinished feature film **The Works** contains no less than 25 robots, including a mechanical ant whose head houses two robot pilots, named Clyde and Ipso Facto. Every detail of the robots

and driving controls is meticulously represented, from the shiny metal texture to working dials and levers. Whatever their value as entertainment, the sequences completed and shown so far include the most believable and striking moving objects yet made by computer graphics.

In the capable hands of MAGI, Triple I, NYIT and others, computer graphics has helped to realise an impressive fleet of imaginative vehicles. Naturally, these vehicles need environments in which to operate, and computer graphics has again been enlisted to create the right surroundings for the light cycle, the mechanical ant and even the human actor. Computer-generated environments, including landscapes, space scenes, interiors and fantasy environments offer great scope for computer graphics techniques. Disney's **The Black Hole** featured a vortex of apparently cosmic forces, produced by Robert Abel and Associates, in which the varying dimensions of the funnel and the changing viewpoint created a dramatic impression of the black hole's mystery and power. Shortly after **The Black Hole**, **Star Trek: The Motion Picture** also included a computer vortex effect, more elaborately realised than the green line grid used for **The Black Hole**. The sequence shows the view from the spaceship Enterprise in 'hyperspace' amid spiralling stars, which are then 'sucked down a tube' as if the spaceship is being sucked back into normal space.

Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan provided an impressively complex sequence of photographic realism in the 60-second 'Genesis bomb' sequence. A deep-space probe carries the notional camera as it flies towards a barren planet, spirals down on its near approach and ejects a 'pod', which falls to the surface of the planet. On impact an explosion generates a disk of flames which expands around the planet. From the ever-spiralling probe, the edge of the disk is seen as a wall of fire. When the whole planet has been covered, gases are given off to give a planetary atmosphere; mountains grow and seas flood the valleys. As the planet recedes from the probe's view, vegetation fills the land and another world is ready for human colonisation. The idea of 'terra-forming' planets for human life is popular in science fiction, but this is the first time it has been convincingly realised in visual form.

The production of this sequence required a co-ordinated input from eight designers and up to ten exposures of the film were needed to create the various parts of the image. The choreography of probe and planet were first decided upon, including, at a late stage, a scene where the flames disappear below the horizon and then spring into view again in dramatic close-up. The appearance of the barren planet was then painted with the aid of a program for making craters, executed by Tom Duff. The effect of the wall of fire was the result of an innovative idea by Bill Reeves, who realised that to produce convincing looking flames it was possible to make use of the random generation of particles and particle systems. These particles may be thought of as points of light ejected in a random direction by the initial explosion, following suitable paths

through space, fading in brightness and eventually dying – very much like sparks thrown up by a bonfire. As particles died more were generated by randomly-created particle systems representing secondary explosions. The initial explosion of the 'Genesis bomb' created 25,000 particles; later in the sequence when fire had engulfed the whole planet, there were 750,000 such particles. The position of each individual particle was computed for each frame so that it could be drawn in the correct position. In fact, each particle was drawn as a short straight line representing the path of its motion during that frame (instead of one instantaneous position). This is called 'motion blurring' and ensures that the particles appear to move smoothly, rather than jumping between frames.

The challenge of making computer graphics environments for **TRON** was of another order of magnitude. In **TRON** there are 15 minutes of purely computer-generated images and 200 other scenes with computer-generated environments. **TRON** was a more ambitious computer graphics project than any other yet completed, and required great accuracy in registering the foreground characters against the backgrounds. In the latter stages of the film, this registration was achieved by filming the actors in a dark, blank set, whose proportions were mirrored in a computer database. Four 'witness points' (light sources) at key positions in the set enabled the computer to match the live set with its memory and to reproduce the visualisation with the same viewpoint, focal length of lens and viewpoint movements. While the shape and size of the set were fixed, not least by the need for correct perspective around the actors, the colours of the set could be varied at will; indeed, the colours of the 'walls' vary in most of the settings for **TRON**.

Perhaps the most spectacular environment in **TRON** is the single vector graphics sequence known as 'Flynn's Ride', after the character who is drawn from his workstation into the heart of the computer. Vector graphics were also used for one of the characters, Bit, whose binary characteristics are to change shape for 'yes' and 'no', while floating near the hero's head. Unfortunately, Bit's extensive role in the film was curtailed to two minutes for scheduling reasons, but it remains one of the most memorable characters in the film – not bad for a pink-sized polyhedron. Bit was generated by Digital Effects Inc., but Flynn's Ride, together with the titles and trailers for **TRON**, were made by Robert Abel and Associates, who showed how far they have come since **The Black Hole**. The Flynn's Ride sequence was realised as a series of ever-diminishing horizontal planes. At first they resembled Los Angeles at night – huge vistas of street lighting and jewelled clusters of neon tubes. As the camera travelled down through these scenes, they resembled more and more a fantasy enriched stack of circuit diagrams, while the traffic became the passage of electrons along metal pathways. These images helped to point up the theme of the film, which is the parallelism between human civilisation and the way programs work in computers. Views from the villain Dill-

ger's office and the final emergence of Flynn from inside the computer to the streets of a metropolis were used to reinforce the theme at the beginning and end of the film.

COMPUTERISED REALITY

Perhaps the most challenging application of computer graphics to feature films has been in the creation of believable human characters. This should be distinguished from the various ways in which cartoon animation has used computer graphics. In the case of a cartoon, the character is realised as a humorous two-dimensional drawing and the computer's contribution lies in animating the image, colouring it or matching it with backgrounds. The character itself, being flat, cannot be entered into the computer as a three-dimensional model and so cannot be manipulated by computer means.

Computer generation of human figures, on the other hand, is among the most exciting goals of computer graphics. A first demonstration was made by Demos and Whitney for *Futureworld*, the sequel to *Westworld*. Peter Fonda was asked to pose in white make-up while a grid was projected on to his face. He was photographed simultaneously from two directions and the resulting images were placed on a digitizing tablet. The important grid intersections were digitized and the computer then had a rough three-dimensional model of the actor's face. In the film, the paper-thin surface of the face and the sides of the head

was revolved for the camera and seen from front and back. The latter stages of constructing the face in solid flat polygons as opposed to a wireframe were also seen. These polygons were at first large and sharply angled, giving the face a faceted shape and a dull white texture. The polygons were then smoothed out around the edges, light sources were added and the face was seen as a shiny, artificial but very recognisable portrait.

The Triple I team under the direction of Richard Taylor, developed this technique further with the 'Cindy Head' for actress Susan Dey in *Looker*. Like Peter Fonda, she was photographed in white make-up with a grid projected onto her face. This time the pictures were taken from several angles. The resulting database of grid intersections was more complex than for the Fonda face and allowed the whole head to be modelled, including the ears. *Looker* was directed by Michael Crichton, as were *Westworld* and *Futureworld*. His intention was again to show the viewer successively more realistic views of the head. The grid co-ordinates were encoded by Art Dunski and Larry Malone to produce a cranium like a geodesic dome and a much tighter network around the facial features. Onto these were mapped the solid polygons for the skin, including lips and nostrils. The eyeballs were given their own spherical shading model and the faceted head became much more realistic as the angles where polygons met were smoothed away. Colour was added for skin tone, lips, pupils and geometric

eyebrows. Yet the expression of the face remained bland and could not be changed.

However, at NYIT, Frederick Parke has been working on both the surface shape of the face and the underlying muscles. Parke's system allows for 50 independent facial actions, which may occur separately or in any combination.

Though the faces presented are less than perfect as regards the shape of the eye and the eyelids (among other factors), the potential for this system is immense and *The Works* will be a first showcase. This is the beginning of the most revolutionary step that computer graphics can take in the feature film world, supplanting not only special effects men, set designers and animators, but also the actors themselves. However, it is very easy to underestimate the amount of work required (both human effort and computer time) to produce even relatively simple computer-generated scenes. Since many tens of thousands of frames must be produced for even a short feature film, this problem is obviously increased; Alvy Ray Smith of Lucasfilm has a cautionary last word: 'It would take 400 years to make a fully computer-generated feature film on present equipment'.

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Warner Brothers

In its heyday—from the late Thirties to the late Fifties—the Warner Brothers cartoon studio produced some of the best, and funniest, American animation. However, it's only in the last 15 or so years that these cartoons have received the critical attention they deserve. Jayne Pilling takes us on a history tour of the house that gave us Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote, and Sylvester and Tweety, to name a few.

Apart from cartoon buffs, a whole new generation of movie-goers have (even if they didn't know it) imbibed something of the spirit of the Warner Brothers cartoons through the work of Steven Spielberg and Joe Dante, both big cartoon fans. Spielberg had Chuck Jones' *Duck Dodgers* in the 24½ *Century* blown up to 70mm for release with *Close Encounters* in the US, and Dante was responsible for the best segment of the movie *Twilight Zone*, a creepy amorality lesson on cartoon addiction. Also look out for the Bob Clampett Porky Pig classic *Kitty Kornered* and you'll recognise where one of the scenes in *Gremlins* comes from.

So what made Warner Bros cartoons so successful and influential?

By the Forties, Warner Bros cartoons were overtaking Disney shorts as box-office attractions. Disney cartoons' forte was in creating a world of anthropomorphised animals that were delightfully (or obnoxiously, according to taste) cute. Warners, in contrast, developed a distinctive style of its own that was brash, irreverent, topical, cynical and sophisticated in subject and tone—in a word, adult. Their cartoons literally teemed with gags, which demanded a much faster, and funnier, pace. Though their characters were in animal form, they were invested with

personalities which were far from cute, being as sharp and wise-cracking as their 'real-life' contemporaries in the Warners' tough guy movies of the Thirties—and in their screwball comedies. And because they were cartoon characters they could play on verbal wit and sexual innuendo to an even greater extent—and get away with it. They achieved the credibility of Disney-style characters, then pulled the rug from under by taking all the liberties possible with cartoon unreality.

Many of the cartoon directors acknowledge their debt to the masters of silent film comedy; significantly not so much to Charlie Chaplin or Harold Lloyd, but rather to Mack Sennett and Buster Keaton. In an interview with Joe Adamson, Tex Avery commented on his style of comedy: "A lot of it comes back from those old slapstick comedies. You can see some of the things they contrived with wires and so forth to get impossible gags... Mack Sennett with his Ford that goes between two trolleys and comes out squashed. We found out early that if you did something with a character, either animal or human, that couldn't possibly be rigged up in live action, then you've got a guaranteed laugh. If a human can do it, a lot of times it isn't funny. But if you

have a fellow hit on the head and he cracks like a piece of china, you know you've got a laugh."

It's impossible to talk about Hollywood animation without reference to Disney. As Chuck Jones has said, "Disney was to animation what Griffiths was to live action, in terms of the tools supplied to those who followed him. Almost all the tools were discovered at Disney's—they were the only ones who had the money and who could, and did, take the time to experiment." The development of techniques of full animation, foreground and background, primary and secondary animation, believable characters with distinct personae and movement, and the synchronisation of sound and music to movement—these were all Disney innovations which inspired his contemporaries.

The early years at Warners saw producer Leon Schlesinger attempting, like everyone else, to emulate Disney's box-office success with the creation of *Looney Tunes* as an answer to the rival *Silly Symphonies*. Whilst a fair amount of interesting cartoons were produced, they weren't terribly exciting or innovative, and wrangles over scales of payment with the notoriously

Daffy Duck and Porky Pig





penny-pinching Schlesinger led to the departure of most of the resident Harmon-Ising cartoon team.

THE WARNER WAY

How then did the distinctive Warners style develop?

After Harmon and Ising had left, Schlesinger was on the look out for new talent. Tex Avery recalled how he landed a job there having directed only two cartoons. "Schlesinger took a gamble. He said 'I'll try you. I'll try you on one picture. I've got some boys here—they're not renegades, but they don't get along with the other two crews. And he gave me Chuck Jones, Bob Clampett and Bob Cannon. Chuck was creative, so was Bob Clampett. Bob Cannon was a terrific draughtsman. And they were tickled to death... they wanted to get a new group going. Schlesinger took us away from the main plant and put us up in a little shack on the (Warners) Sunset lot, in some old dressing room or toilet or something... we called it 'Termite Terrace'." And he was smart, he didn't disturb us."

Avery was a prime force in setting the house style: not just for creating the initial personalities which would become Warners' first cartoon stars—Porky Pig, Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck—but in engineering an atmosphere that fostered the all important collaborative spirit. Michael Maltese, writer and gagman who became one of Jones' closest collaborators in the later years at the studio, recalls that early period. "It was fun going to work. The atmosphere! That place looked old, beat up... the boss Schlesinger passed out the cheques once a week and he'd say 'Phew, let me outta here! This looks like a shithouse!' But we loved it... The guy with the most mischievous Bugs Bunny character in the whole studio was Tex Avery. He kept that studio jumping. When he was around you got a kind of gaggy atmosphere. One thing we learned was not to be self-conscious... when you're thinking up stories or cartoons the kidding around we did sort of broke down the barrier and enabled us to go unashamedly, almost like children, into making absolute idiots of ourselves!"

Robert McKimson, who worked for many years as an animator before being promoted to his own unit as director, commented on how this collaboration worked in an interview with Mike Nedone. "Each director had his own storymen, and we'd work out a storyline together. Then we'd draw up a storyboard until we had a good cartoon planned out... we'd get together in a jam session of all the directors and storymen. These were what Jones called 'Big Yes' sessions—'nobody was allowed to say no for the entire two-hour meeting', but all positive contributions, from whoever, were enthusiastically adopted."

Jones comments further, on the relation of animator to director. "The director was actually a producer-director, and he had absolute authority.

But of course, we still need good actors, just as a live action director does. In our case, the animator is the actor. Very few animators are humorous, so they don't contribute much in that way, but they do contribute brilliant animation." The exception, however, was Ken Harris (who went on to work with Richard Williams), "a brilliant comic animator—his stuff would always come back funnier than what I had described to him."

The storyboard would then lead to more specific instructions for the team (after director and storyman there was someone to do the layouts and backgrounds, and the animator and his assistants). "The director would stage the thing and draw in the characters and time the action on sheets," explains Avery. "We'd tell the animators how to do it. Accents on the dialogue track were always important in drawing the character in movement." (McKimson's training in anatomical drawing obviously

contributed a great deal to the believability of character movement.)

By the late Thirties Avery, Jones, Clampett and Freleng were working at Warners, together with a team of animators (including McKimson, Harris, Norman McCabe, Bob Cannon, Virgil Ross) and storymen (including Mike Maltese, Warren Foster, Dave Monahan, Rich Hogan). Carl Stalling, another ex-Disney man, who excelled at fitting music to storyline and gags (helped by his knowledge of the Warners' song publishing repertoire and his own music companies), and Mel Blanc, who voiced most of the characters, also contributed to the style of development and sense of energy at the studio.

Although Frank Tashlin was to leave in 1938, and most of his best work came out of his brief return stint during the war, he too left his mark, by incorporating adventurous live action cutting techniques and camera angles into the

Bugs Bunny, superstar



design of cartoons. He was also influential in developing the rapid sight gags which became a hallmark of Warner Bros cartoons (and a speciality of Avery's). Tashlin was a fascinating figure too as he was one of the only cartoon directors to have transferred successfully into live-action (*The Girl Can't Help It*, *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter*, and Jerry Lewis are obvious examples of the cross-fertilisation at work). Mitchell Cohen has commented, "Jerry Lewis, as manipulated by Tashlin, is as close in his mugging and mobility to a Warners' cartoon character as a human being can approximate. Even more noticeable is the continued lampooning of consumer culture, faddism and human foibles."

Economic pressure was also a factor in the development of Warners' cartoons, particularly in relation to the growing expertise with split-second timing. Jones again, "When we timed a picture and sent it to the animators that was it - zero. We learned how to time things to precisely the right length: 540 feet, six minutes. The editing was all in the director's head. This wasn't necessarily true at Disney's, but we didn't actually physically cut our stuff at all. I've never met a live action director or editor who understands how this can be done. And this was the necessity of the situation, since we weren't allowed any retakes. We only had so much footage and we had to do it right first time. We did retakes in the sense that we'd reanimate something if it was wrong, but we never refilmed."

HOLLYWOOD SPOOFS

Another distinctive feature of Warners' cartoons, which points to their enduring modernity and appeal to movie conscious audiences today, is the way they delighted in biting the hand that fed them - Hollywood movies themselves. Send-ups of titles were common to all the studios, though none had the consistent wit of Warners, which included such gems as *The Big Snooze*, *Birth of a Notion*, *What Makes Daffy Duck*, *Zoom and Bored*, *Moby Duck*. Debunking Hollywood went beyond titles, however, at Termite Terrace. One speciality was caricaturing Hollywood stars. *Slick Hare* (Freling, 1947) has Elmer Fudd as a swanky (well, he tries) restaurateur, whose clientele include Gregory Peck, Frank Sinatra, Ray Milland (who pays his bill with a typewriter and gets a bunch of miniature machines as small change), Sidney Greenstreet (or rather, his protruding belly), whilst the action has Fudd chasing Bugs 'cos Bogart's ordered fried rabbit for 'babys' Bacall... and Bugs at one point plays Groucho to Elmer's Harpo.

Then there were the genre spoofs. *Tugs with Dirty Mugs* (Avery, 1939) is a hilarious parody of gangster movies, in which Officer Flatfoot Flanagan chases mobster Killer Diller as played by an ugly pooch thespian, Edward G. Rob'em Some. A split-screen phone

conversation has the gangster leaning over the frame-line to press his point more physically... and a spoilsport spectator who gives the plot away and gets shot from the screen. Bob Clampett's notorious blackface spoof of *Snow White - Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarves* (1942) continued a vein he'd mined earlier with *Corny Concerto* (*Fantasia*) (1943) and *Bacall to Arms* (1946) which elaborated wickedly on footage retoscoped from *To Have and Have Not*, whose cartoon version stars Humphrey Bogart and Laurie Rucol. Jones' masterpiece in this area is *Scarlet Pumpernickel* (1959), a costume epic written by Daffy Dumas Duck, which he's trying to sell to the studio head as an alternative to his usual low comedy roles. It is a magnificent homage/spoof of the Errol Flynn period swashbucklers.



WARNER BROTHERS: Pepe Le Pew, phew!

DAFFY DECONSTRUCTION

Warners even explored the cartoon world itself. *You Ought to be in Pictures* (Freling 1940) ingeniously combines live action and animation as Daffy spurs Porky to try his fortune in real movies, maybe as leading man to Bette Davis or Greta Garbo. Most wonderful of all is Jones' *Duck Amuck* (1953) in which an unseen animator - finally revealed as an all too familiar enemy of the victim/protagonist - torments Daffy by switching backgrounds on him, necessitating costume changes that never catch up, painting him in ludicrous polka dots, giving him a new and monstrous form, and applying the eraser

with sadistic relish. Deconstruction was never so lucidly - or hilariously - illustrated, and Daffy achieves truly heroic status with his existential angst.

By the late Forties Clampett and Avery had left Warners (Avery for MGM), and distinct units were set up under the direction of Jones, Isadore 'Fritz' Freling and McKimson, each responsible for ten cartoons a year, about one every five weeks. Each had to produce two Bugs Bunny shorts, one-shots or new character try-outs, and their own particular characters - Freling had Yosemite Sam (reputedly a character close to his own) and Sylvester and Tweety; McKimson created Foghorn Leghorn and the Tasmanian Devil; and Jones had Pepe Le Pew and the *Road Runner* series.

One of the pleasures of Warner Brother cartoon spotting is charting the way individual directors developed particular characters and their personality interactions. Jones comments interestingly on this, "My Bugs was actually quite different from Freling's. Maybe his cartoons were funnier - more physical, with things happening quickly... Bugs would cleverly do something at the last moment. My Bugs tended to think out his problems... and I insisted upon stronger provocation. Two or three things would happen before he got mad enough, and he'd say 'Of course you know, this means war'. My Bugs is a counter-revolutionary, you know. I'd suspect that Fritz' Bugs would be more of a scamp, and Tex Avery's more of a controlled lunatic. Bob Clampett's was a thoroughly amoral lunatic, with flashes of greatness."

Whilst Jones brought some pathos to Daffy Duck's delusions of grandeur, Freling maintained the character's utter obnoxiousness. Jones again, "Fritz was the one who kind of got him into that cowardly self-preservation. The minute he did it, I understood. I knew how I'd feel. It's the awfulness when you're on the battlefield of realising that when your buddy is shot that your basic feeling is one of relief it wasn't you."

Freling was also responsible for developing Sylvester as more than just a foil for the self-consciously cute Tweety. He also had a special knowledge and interest in music. Notable in this respect are *Rhapsody in Rivets* (1941) where a lion-conductor-construction foreman leads his crew-symphony orchestra in building the gigantic Empire State skyscraper to List's Second Hungarian Rhapsody; *Back Alley Oproar* (1948) and the offbeat *Three Little Bops* (1957), a stylish jazz scored version of the "Three Little Pigs" tale. This wolf relentlessly blows down the three nightclubs where the beret'd pigs are giggling, until he's finally dynamited to Hell, where he learns to blow hot enough to join the band.

Clampett is more difficult to characterise. Responsible for most of the early Porky Pigs, some of them excellent, his flair for outrageousness and invention are best described by Mitchell Cohen. "In



WARNER BROTHERS: Will success ever reach Wile E?

Clampett's best work," says Cohen, "the humour is the product of a simple idea or object that invited parody, taken to the absolute furthest point this side of tastelessness. Like the best black humourists, Clampett deals with the touchiest subjects – suicide, insanity, senility – and through exaggeration makes them appropriate and hilarious comic terrain."

KEATON AND COYOTES

Chuck Jones, whose early work at Warner Brothers was still visibly influenced by Disney, soon developed his own gift for character observation, non-verbal wit and a penchant for investigating the art of animation. A close working relationship with writer

Mike Maltese and designer Maurice Noble, along with animator Ken Harris, gave him ample opportunity to develop his ideas. He became Warners' greatest animator or with an ever-expanding repertoire of characters and styles. The variety of cartoons he produced demands a cartoon-by-cartoon evaluation that would be too long here.

He's perhaps most widely known for the *Road Runner* series (oddly named, as the Coyote is the real focus of attention). These achieved an amazing variation-on-a-theme inventiveness, still delight after countless viewings. They work on the basis of ever more complicated gags around an enduring incompatibility with mechanical tools, facial expressions that chart the depths of futility and failure, and the formal experiments with speed, gravity and spatial coordinates. Jones quotes

Santayana's definition of a fanatic to describe the Coyote: "someone who redoubles his efforts when he's forgotten his aims". He too quotes the influence of Keaton. "The Coyote is always giving little flicks of the eye towards the camera when he realises that some new disaster is about to hit him. Keaton did that; the action freezes for a moment, tension builds. You're conspiring with the audience. Then the tension breaks in laughter. . . . In comedy less is always more. The narrower the discipline in the *Road Runner* series – for instance, that there was no dialogue, that the Road Runner wouldn't hurt the Coyote, that the Coyote would be victimised by his own ineptitude – the better it got."

Although the *Road Runners* stand out almost alone amongst Warners' output of the later years, they're a fitting epitaph to a superb body of work.



LEGEND: Lili begins to experience the results of her wrongdoing

INNOVATIVE is one of those words that seem to apply to any new director who comes along with something more than your basic boy-meets-girl-meets-alien or boy takes on the Pentagon with a pocket-calculator story, and as such I would say that it is a very over-used word, especially in Science Fiction films. But there are some directors who really earn the title, and who can easily be recognised by the imitation films that are spawned from their work. Take, for instance, the Spielberg/Lucas twins, or George Miller or even Sam Peckinpah, whose slo-mo blood-splattering gun-fights have turned the stomach of even the strongest Madras curry eater.

Among this select few, I would also place Ridley Scott, whose few films to date include such great

It's only a MOVIE

clone-producers as *Alien* and *Blade Runner*. Thus, on seeing his new release, I was expecting nothing short of perfection in terms of originality and style. *Sic transit gloria mundi*... as my old granny was wont to mutter. As a staunch fan (of Mr Scott, not granny) I was

mightily disappointed.

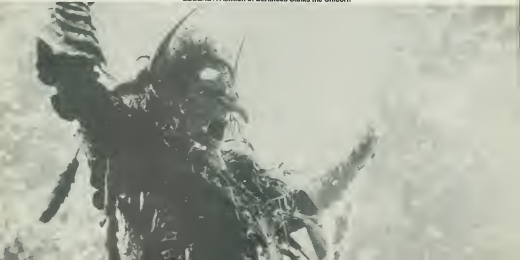
The story of *Legend* as such, is a fairy-tale in which Lord Darkness, with the aid of his numerous minions, hopes to take over the world, or fairylend, or where-ever, by stealing the horns of the last pair of surviving unicorns, which repre-

sent everything that is good and innocent. To this end he elicits the aid of an unwitting princess, who manages to tame the beasts temporarily. Everything looks 'Grimm', as the utterly evil Darkness compels with one horn seduces the princess back to his evil castle, while the world outside turns colder than a hotel air-conditioner. The only thing standing in Darkness's way is a pes-brained woodsman called Jack, and a bunch of pint-sized rejects from a Jawa robot-factory, laughably called dwarfs. A bit like Red Dawn actually, and equally believable!

You don't have to have more than a pea-brain to guess who wins out in the end, and mames the princess. (Clue: He doesn't have two horns or stomp about on cloven hooves.)

Ridley Scott's 'original' idea, which he got from a comic-strip, was

LEGEND: A Minion of Darknees Stalks the Unicorn





LEGEND: Jack and Lelchen trapped in the dungeons of darkness

to write a fairy-tale which could be universally understood, using imagery inspired by Jean Cocteau's masterpiece 'The Beauty And The Beast'. He didn't want it to be too European or Celtic in flavour, so that it could appeal to a wider (i.e. American) audience. So we are left with a simplistic children's story with adult overtones, thereby appealing to neither age-group.

What's left of the film is barely salvaged by some superb cinematography and lovingly created sets, in which whole forests were constructed using Pinewood's enormous '007' soundstage.

The entire stage was destroyed by fire a few days before the final shooting, and perhaps Mr Scott should have taken heed of this timely act of God. Unfortunately he did not, and the relevant sections were rebuilt outside the restaurant and timing was completed.

The gallant men responsible for the beautiful look of the film were Director of Photography Alex Thomson and Production Designer Assheton Gordon. Thomson had previously worked on John Boorman's vastly superior fantasy 'Excalibur'. This part of the production team certainly didn't let the side down.

The acting? Luckily for us of a sensitive nature, the script keeps words to a bare minimum. But despite this there were two noticeable performances from Tim Curry and David Bennent (of 'Tin Drum' fame). Noticeable only because the others were so, how shall I say, unremarkable. I don't want to appear too callous, but I was always led to believe that three prime ingredients for a successful film were a good script, good actors and good visuals. If you get my drift. This is something that Scott

has followed faithfully in his previous films, relying on such talent as Joseph Conrad, Alan Dean Foster and Philip K. Dick for written inspiration; John Hurt, Katharine, Albert Finney, Tom Conti and Harrison Ford amongst others for actors; and H.R. Giger, Chris Foss, Moebius, Ron Cobb and Dan O'Bannon to make the films look good. Throw in Michael Jackson and Spielberg and it would read like a Ronnie Reagan anniversary reunion.

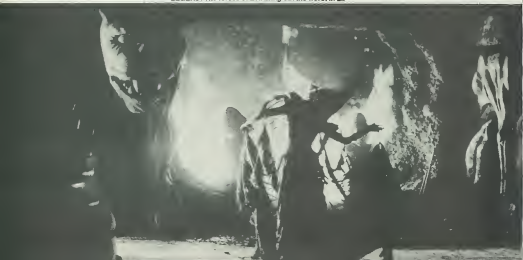
You get the point though: with talent like that any fool could become an overnight innovator.

So where did Mr Scott go wrong? Well, with the exception of Tim Curry, there are no actors in his film with any particular presence on the screen, so that the whole thing appears lop-sided in favour of the baddies, and no one gives a cuss who rescues the

unicorns. A great shame really, because the unicorns are about the only thing that are the least bit interesting in terms of performance. The other problem of course is in choosing someone with a name like William Hjortberg to write your screenplay for you. Thus, Mr Scott's talent for turning a good story into a very good film has been severely wasted. I just hope that the kids get more out of it than I did. All we are left with is beautifully filmed series of scenes, with great use of shade and light; but that is all there is. A great folly, which I suppose every director is prone to at least once in his lifetime.

I would advise anyone going to this film to forget who directed it and just appreciate it for its scenic beauty. I myself am waiting with bated breath for the next one. We still love you Ridley Scott - so get innovating again!

LEGEND: The forces of Evil bring out the worst in LII



Brains in Boxes

Special feature by John Gaze

This issue we look at some examples of brains being kept alive in machines and then begin to examine one particular universe of the imagination infested by such creatures.

SAY "Doctor Who" these days and probably the words which come most readily to mind are "cancellation", "the end" and "finished", yet only a couple of years ago the most common one would have been "Daleks". Few people would disagree that the programme owes its early success to those animated pepper pots, but strangely these aliens are not by any means a

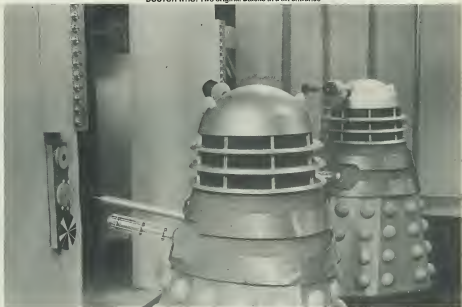
very new idea. Perhaps the first variation of this theme was used by good old H.G. Wells in his story *The War of the Worlds*. His Martians were almost all brain and were carried around in their three-legged machines.

As long ago as 1953 two films were released with ideas along this line. *Donovan's Brain* was about a brain kept alive in a tank, and *Invaders From Mars* (now re-made by Tobe Hooper) featured a Martian which comprised just a head with arms coming out of it. The film *Colossus of New York* (1958) concerned the placing of a man's brain in a mechanical body. As nearly always seems to happen in these stories the awesome power of the new body corrupted the living brain and it became power-mad. In a *Quatermass* type ending, the creature realised it was losing its humanity and effectively destroyed itself.

In 1965 the American magazine *IF* published a story by Keith Laumer which went on to form the basis of his novel *A Plague of Demons*. The demons of the title were on Earth collecting the brains of creatures, particularly Mankind's, to use in a war on a far-off planet. The brains were conditioned, de-personalised, and placed inside vast war machines, over seventy-two feet tall. (This is not very far from the idea of the 'new' Daleks which Davros was trying to create from humans in *Revelation of the Daleks*.) The brains of cats and dogs were also used, to animate maintenance machines.

Another story published in 1964 including this theme was the short story *The Coldest Place* by Larry Niven. In this there were only two characters, the narrator and Eric. Eric, however, was not an ordinary character, he was a brain operating a space

DOCTOR WHO: Two original Daleks at a lift entrance







DOCTOR WHO: A city built for Daleks (two Daleks thro' corridor)

ship. As Niven described, "Eric looked much like an electrical network, except for the grey mass at the top which was his brain. In all directions from his spinal cord and brain . . . Eric's nerves reached out to master the ship."

Television

On television there have been a few ventures into this area. In *Star Trek* (20-09-68) the idea of Niven's Eric was paralleled when Spock's brain was used for a while to control the environment of an alien community on a planet. The *Doomwatch* episode "The Iron Doctor" (25-01-71) concerned a man (Patrick Troughton) slowly dying of an incurable disease. As each part

of his body failed it was replaced by something mechanical: iron lungs, kidney machines etc. Eventually the brain would only be able to communicate with the outside world by a form of Morse Code.

In *Doctor Who* the idea of parts of a body being replaced as it degenerated has been used quite often, most notoriously giving rise to the infamous Cybermen, although these were creatures more of an altered and improved body rather than an encased brain. In the story *The Mind of Evil* (1971) a strange brain-like creature was housed inside the Keller machine. From there it fed on the evil emanations of human beings, learning to move, and kill. The Morpho in the 1964 story *The Keys of Marinus* were a type of mutated brain which ruled a city on

Marinus. They, however, were encased in glass domes in a control room and were totally immobile. In *The Brain of Morbius* (1976) the brain of the supposedly dead Time Lord Morbius was kept alive in a life-support machine before Solon placed it in its new body.

Origins of the Daleks

Why is it, then, that in 1963, and for the next few years, the Daleks caused such a sensation with what was essentially an old idea? The answer no doubt lies on many levels, but I suspect there were two main reasons. For one thing, although the idea itself was basically not new, the underlying reason for the "brains" existence was. The historical background to the Daleks was important, and the way in which they had been shaped into the almost emotionless, cruel and calculating creatures we all loved to hate. However, it must be pointed out that the Daleks have been given two origins by their creator, Terry Nation, namely the original (and best) mentioned in their very first story, and the Davros version, which runs as follows:

Davros was a great scientist of the Kaled race on Skaro. His people had been at war with the Thals for hundreds of years and during that time the weapons used began to produce genetic mutations. The Kaleds expelled those afflicted by these changes, the Mutos, from their city to keep the race pure, but Davros foresaw that the Kaleds would inevitably mutate and he experimented to find their final form. This form was a twisted creature, effectively a brain with almost no body. The creatures were virtually immobile and so needed some means to move and protect themselves. Davros tried various "travel machines" and the Mark III version proved successful. This combination of creature and machine he named a Dalek. (Although why the word Dalek should just happen to be an anagram for Kaled in the alien language of Skaro I'm not sure.)

Turning to the original explanation of the creation of the Daleks, which, to me, has always been the more interesting and credible, it must be borne in mind that in 1963 it was novel for the TV audience to find the drama taking place on a planet way beyond our solar system. Everything was new and very alien, enough to frighten us behind the sofa!

The history of these Daleks was different from the Davros version, and even sadder. The Davros Daleks were the hapless unnatural consequences of Davros's experiments and mind control. The original Daleks were the natural product of just one unnatural event.

The explosion of a Neutron Bomb.

Over five hundred years before the Doctor first arrived on Skaro there had been two races on the planet, the Thals and the Dals. The Thals were a warlike race while the Dals were philosophers and teachers. War broke out between the races, ending with the explosion of the neutron bomb. Nearly all life on the planet was destroyed, but not quite.

The Thals wandered the planet, with generation after generation of mutation. Finally

their form settled as the tall handsome blond-haired humanoids. At the same time they devised a drug which prevented the radiation from affecting them any more. The outcome of the war had been so terrible that they rejected all thoughts of violence and became totally peaceful.

The story for the Dals was somewhat different. In a desperate, and abortive, attempt to shield themselves from the radiation they built personal protective machines which they then lived in all the time.

So were born the Daleks.

They built a huge underground city as a shelter, and retreated into it. Yet despite their precautions the radiation was still taking its toll, and inside their machines they also mutated.

For them the mutation did not go full circle. They kept their brilliance, probably even increased it, but their bodies started to waste away and become deformed. They depended more and more on their machines and grew increasingly to hate other life

forms which were not so afflicted. In their warped minds they were the norm, and the Thals the horrible mutations. This was confirmed even more in their minds when they discovered that they actually needed the radiation in order to survive.

There was a sad story of a brilliant race destroyed, a true tragedy, and, as we learned later, a curse on the rest of the Universe.

Thus were the audiences of the early sixties introduced to a very alien race, in a very alien setting, which brings me to another reason for the success of the Daleks—their design and the design of their environment.

An Alien Look

The design of the futuristic Dalek world came from the mind of Raymond Cusick. He took what seems to be a very obvious step, but one which is nearly always ignored, even now, and designed the Dalek world

for the Daleks, not for humans. In how many films or TV series have alien ships or worlds been really designed with the requirements of the human heroes in mind? This was not for Mr Cusick—he wanted to emphasise the complete alien-ness of Skaro and the Daleks, and designed accordingly.

Even before we met the Daleks, their strange environment had been established. There was a petrified jungle, full of dead plants which were clearly not of our world, and just beyond it the marvellous Dalek city at the foot of a vast mountain range. Incidentally, the city we eventually saw was not the first model built by the makers of the programme. This had proved to look too small on the screen and so a larger one was built. For many years after the story had been shown the Dalek city was talked about in tones of admiration.

Viewed from afar, however, the city could have been built for humans. It was only when we saw inside that it quickly became

DOCTOR WHO: The Dalek city on Skaro, a "huge underground shelter"



obvious that whoever lived there, or had lived there, was not like us. The entire structure was made of metal. The doors were wide at the base and narrower at the top, and the ceilings were low, low enough to make our intrepid time-travellers stoop in the corridors.

Then of course there were the Daleks themselves. Originally the casings were to have been made from fibre-glass but internal politics in the BBC stopped that and they ended up being made from good old wood. Not that that was very obvious to the viewer. To us the Daleks were totally metallic. Cusick managed very successfully to stop us thinking even for a moment that there was just a man inside. The programme itself dared to prompt this bald question and answered with the horrific creature which we were not allowed to see (well for three years at least). Ray Cusick had imagined what the creature might look like, but since all that was needed for the story was a tentacle/claw, it was never made.

Dalek Technology

Another important factor was the Dalek machinery. The doors were opened by waving a hand or sucker in close proximity to some type of sensor. The controls were all disc-shaped, easy for the Dalek sucker to turn. It was only in later years that suddenly the Daleks used switches as we do. Another good point was the fact that the Dalek machinery remained consistent throughout the Hartnell years. Naturally this was just a monetary constraint but it gave an excellent continuity to all the stories and made them fit together even better.

The second Dalek story featured little new in the Dalek universe since it was set on Earth. We did manage to see inside the Dalek flying saucers, full of the control machinery from their first story, and the Daleks themselves were only slightly modi-



DOCTOR WHO: Raymond Cusick with his original idea of the Dalek Creature

fied to travel on the ground. They were given deeper base skirts (to conceal bigger wheels for ground travel) and discs on their backs to pick up power.

Another change in the Dalek design, and an advance in their technological capability, was due in their next story, as we shall see in the next issue of *Starburst*. ■

DOCTOR WHO: The first Daleks in their standard control room



TV ZONE

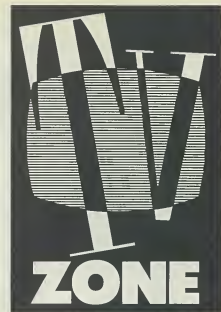
by PETER ANDREWS

WHAT do Mary Poppins, Bedknobs and Broomsticks, Peter's Dragon, Huckleberry Finn and Jane have in common? Well, apart from the fact that they are all works of fiction adapted to either film or tv format they all incorporated one of the most imaginative ideas usable in the industry today, mixing live action with animation. Who remembers the American musical tv adventures of Huck Finn with his two friends, Tom Sawyer and a girl whose name escapes me (pat on the back for the first person to remember her name), being shot weekly into the world of animation and fighting evil villains, the leader of whom borrowed quite extensively from Disney's interpretation of J.M. Barrie's Captain Hook? If you do, you'll probably be quite fond of programmes that mix the real with the imaginary (the series had very little else to recommend it). The recent release by BBC Video of two of their severest 55 minute extravaganzas prompted me to look up the maker of the programmes, *The Snow Queen* and *The Light Princess*.

Ian Keill has quite a background in the field of tv fantasy. His work is made by the BBC's Network Features (i.e. the 'this-programme-doesn't easily fit into any other category' department) and consists of vaguely fantasy-based shows – usually a programme of children's content with quite adult wit – never lewd but always sharp and poignant. A very great deal of these involve the remaking of fairy tales.

The Snow Queen

The Snow Queen was based on the Hans Anderson fairy tale about a broken mirror, an arrogant little boy and innocent love. The devil makes a mirror that reflects nothing but the evil within us all. His little demons try to shine it in the face of God but drop it on the way and the tiny splinters spread through eternity, become part of other glass-based objects. One of these is a street lamp that shatters on Christmas Eve and a silver goes through the eye of a boy called Kay who is playing with his friend Gerda. From that moment on Kay's heart seems to grow colder and unkind and he goes to bed, not caring at all about Christmas. That night he is stolen away by the Snow Queen, a malevolent matriarch who lives beyond Lapland and is made, somewhat hypnotically, to solve a puzzle. Kay is promised power in return. Gerda meanwhile chases after Kay and meets all sorts of strange people and talking animals on her travels. Firstly she enters the Summer Garden and meets the pantomime-like witch (played somewhat Widow Twankey style by David Battley) and a bunch of totally unhelpful talking flowers. Leaving



there she encounters a German monocled crow who says he may have seen the smart Kay. The crow tells her about a young princess who is looking for a suitor. The man she has chosen fits Kay's description but when Gerda bursts into their bedroom she is more than embarrassed to discover it is not her friend. The Princess however, played superbly by a young Tracyy Chids (now better known in the BBC series *Gladiators* 'Way'), feels sorry for Gerda, gives her some regal clothes and a royal coach to continue her travels.

In typical Anderson tradition, a bodhrthy band of robbers mistake Gerda for the Princess,

slaughter her guards and driver and kidnap her. She is eventually befriended by a couple of birds and a stag who tell her that Kay is with the Snow Queen and has nearly finished the puzzle. The animals and birds are terribly well animated and, unlike the robbers, do not overset (John Wells, her again, voices the Stag). Escaping with the Stag, Gerda meets the Finnwife, who lives in an igloo on the edge of the 'safe' world. She sends Gerda in the direction of the Snow Queen's palace and Gerda gets past the phantom guards and finds Kay, but cannot convince him to leave with her. The puzzle, forming the word Eternity out of rocks, is al-

most complete and then the Snow Queen (the special effects make-up on actress Mercedes Burleigh is beautiful) returns. Kay is distracted, and the ice slivers melt, helped by Gerda's love. Just as the Queen is about to enact her revenge on Gerda the Ice Palace in which she lives cracks up and the Queen is apparently destroyed. Gerda and Kay are protected by the Summer Garden Witch's spells while the Finnwife (Gwen Taylor) sends the four winds to carry our heroes home for Christmas, and so they awake in bed – Kay now has normal self with no recollection of the adventures.

The Snow Queen is very good but presumably unintentionally the animated animals are a lot more endearing than their human friends. Joshua Le Touzal as Kay is sometimes convincingly spiteful, but Linda Slater as Gerda is neither consistently good or bad but totally incoherent – it is a shame that Tracyy Chids didn't play her. Errol Le Cam's illustrations are stunning, very fairy tale and quite convincing – especially the exterior of the Ice Palace, seen best when Gerda is trying to rescue Kay at the climax. The story is almost word for word in places that of Anderson's original, which lets it down as there is little room for humour, which in a fantasy like this is a mistake, if only because of the inclusion of the Summer Garden Witch, who is too out of place with the rest of the characters, whether real or animated.

The Light Princess

Humour however is much more prevalent in Ian Keill's production of *The Light Princess*. The story is told by a couple of frogs – a huge bullfrog with cigar, brandy and crown, telling the impressionable youngster. The bigger one is voiced, appropriately by the late Peter Bull, while Kenneth Williams drops his r's as a frog who's a bit of a dweeb. The story told by the 'bull' frog is about the King who leaves his counting house to visit



his wife who is watching the bees making honey whilst outside there is a maid trying to hang out washing while avoiding the nose-pecking blackbirds (nursery rhyme fans ought to know that scenario). The Queen (Gwen Taylor again) is pregnant and the King (George A. Cooper) is overjoyed. A baby girl is born (apparently called "Princess") and the King sends out invitations to her christening but forgets his own sister, the witch Makemnot who seeks her revenge by installing in the baby levity – in both sense of the word. From the moment of the christening onwards she does nothing but laugh and float around, unable to stay on

the ground. Terence Bayler as the Chancellor and the delightful Irene Handle as the Nurse do their very best to help her but the Princess seems incurable. When she is seventeen (and now played by ex-Black Beauty starlet Stacey Dorning) she falls in the river and finds that gravity keeps her there, thus she is reluctant to stop swimming (The river by the way is animated and the clever mixing as she swims about and boats – real not drawn – bob about is nothing short of genius). Meanwhile a Prince is sent to find his destiny in the woods, aided only by his faithful owl (voice of James Hayter). The Prince (John Fortune) comes ac-

ross a well, known as the Oracle (voiced in full Irish brogue by David Kelly) which points him in the direction of the Princess. The two then meet and fall in love in the water but when wicked Makemnot (played outrageously evilly by Anna Quayle) and her cat Mephisto (voiced equally nastily by Kenneth Williams) drain the water away and the Princess floats again and forgets her love for the Prince. The Prince, realising that his life is empty without her offers to die to plug the hole the witch created (thus fulfilling a prophecy) and drown as it fills with water. As this happens the Princess realises she does love the man and saves him.

The water does not drain away but instead it rains and keeps the river full. The excess water pours down the hole and shortly after Makemnot is awoken by his house filling with water and she, like Mephisto moments earlier drowns – a victim of her own schemes. As she dies, the Princess gains gravity and she goes off to marry the Prince and live happily ever after.

The *Light Princess* is much better than *The Snow Queen*, Enid Le Cain's illustrations are just as good but the animation is better, and with no children around, the acting is much better. The characters are lot more likeable and much more humorous, especially the incompetent Prince (who accidentally destroys the forest elves when they attack him by letting his face mask cover his eyes, falling about and severing their heads with his dangerous sword-waving). The rapport between the Prince and Owl is great, especially when the Prince is despondent. "Where there's a will..." starts the Owl encouragingly. "There's what?" snaps back the Prince. "A beneficiary I suppose" ends the Owl lamely. Later the Owl is again trying to make him happy to which the Prince replies "Yes, and pigs might fly" whereupon a fat pig with wings falls out of the sky and lands skewered on his sword, a very cross expression on its face. The wedding of animation and live action here is much more convincing and less contrived. As I mentioned before, the water scenes are great and the serpent Makemnot creates is good as well. However, the show is stolen by Mephisto the cat, who is superbly drawn and terribly evil looking, and shares the same look in the eyes as his mentor Anna Quayle is the best of the humans but Irene Handle is lovable.

If you want a taste of good animation and live action mixing, try and see *The Light Princess*. And if you want to catch up on other work Ian Keill and his team have done recently look out for re-runs of *Schoolgirl Chums* and *St Ursulas In Danger* which weren't animation-based, but used the original idea of ending scenes with 1930's Enid Blyton-like illustrations of characters, or the ever popular Jane, starring ex-Blake's *Seven* star Glynis Barber.

High-tech effects

In these days of hi-tech synch-scene effects, good CSO and steadicam cameras it shouldn't be too long before we see even better mixing of cartoon and real life. The BBC adaptation of *Box of Delights* last year (also on video) was possibly a step towards it and although not using cartoons, the current *Alice In Wonderland* is also a step in the right direction. Nearly ten years after *The Snow Queen* was first shown, perhaps it is time Ian Keill used the facilities the BBC now has and had a go at doing another fairy tale. Until then



ALICE IN WONDERLAND: The White Rabbit (Jonathan Cecil) and Alice (Kate Dorman)

First off we have a look at a new publication in the seemingly endless parade of spin-offs from Douglas Adams' radio series, **THE HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY**. Personally I have always preferred the original radio version and now here it is...

HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY: Original

Radio Scripts
By Douglas Adams,
ed. Geoffrey Perkins.
(Pan, 249pp. £4.99)

At last, like the Worm Ouroboros biting itself in the rear, the Hitch-Hiker phenomenon has come full circle. The radio series began the amended repeats, which began the records, which began the books, which began the TV series: now at last we can learn what really happened in the Beginning. It's an opportunity as tempting as checking the Ten Commandments' original carbon copies. ("But Moses, it says adulteration...")

Here, in short, are the original Hitcher scripts as they were first broadcast. Parts are disappointing: Pan promise "tols which were reluctantly cut", but most such material was thrifly recycled into the records, books, etc. It's also surprising how many good lines, which you could swear you heard in this first series, turn out not to be here at all: the weak parts have been through a lot of polishing since 1978.

On the other hand, certain chunks were broadcast and then vanished: the deadly encounter between Beesblebrox and the Reverend Rugblatter Boast, the gigantic statue of Arthur Dent throwing The Nutrimatic Cup, the clones, the ecological tangle of birds and shoe shops... Also included are forgotten snippets like the Announcer's throw-away lines ("Parents of young organic life-forms are warned that towels can be harmful if swallowed in large

Fantasy BOOKSHELF

quantities") and Radio Times captions (ARTHUR: Don't ask me how it works or I'll start to whimper).

The man who steals the show is producer Perkins, whose introduction and footnotes are (a) funny, (b) informative, right down to music credits and special-effects secrets; and (c) not half as familiar as Adams' gags. "Peculiarly enough," he reveals, "quite a few people had already come across an Arthur Dent who in 1601 had published a Puritan tract called 'The Plaine Man's Pathway to Heaven'. Douglas claims never to have heard of this..."

Adams, though popping up to reveal the inner significance of towels and the source of his shoe shop phobia, now seems jaded as regards humour. But his original effects directions still conjure up the manic feel of that departed era.

The monster rolls his eyes which turn red, runs then sort of messy cur, it runs its tongue round its lips, blinks a couple of times and then mentally registers that it has just remembered what 10 across in the Galactic Times Crossword was today, makes a mental note to write it in when it's next got a couple of minutes. It may be my hearing trouble, but I don't remember that sound effect at all.

Despite minor disappointments, this is a good, solid book: twelve complete scripts, two introductions, pages of annotation, no scribbles or pretentious layout to get between you and the all-important words. It does not, however, have the words DON'T PANIC in large friendly letters on the cover. Instead, look for a teacup, the numerals 42 and a disembodied ear... which for all I know mean DON'T PANIC in large, friendly Egyptian hieroglyphs.

David Langford

On a more serious note is a novel from an author I admire, if guardedly.

DOMAIN

By James Herbert
(New English Library, 422 pp.
£2.50)

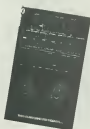
Domain is a good book. It is advertised as the third in the Rats series of books, a misleading hook for the potential customer. The novel is not about the rats, it is foremost a

thousand feet above Hyde Park" – and for the rest of the novel you are living through the resultant carnage and death on an epic scale.

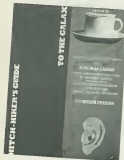
Despite this excellent subject matter, the standard Herbert style is very much in evidence, and this is one of the main faults with his books. He will insist upon splitting up the 'story' chapters with a 'death' chapter in which a new character is introduced; fleshed out; his or her problems revealed; and then killed in a particularly graphic and nasty manner. Those readers in the know can almost skip over every other chapter to ensure that just the plot is read and not a lot of lurid sensational rubbish.

As usual with Herbert's novels, the lead character is well drawn and is very identifiable as a 'real' person, however the rest of cast of characters lack any real depth and the thumb-nail histories the author gives them do not seem to help. One almost wishes that some of the minor 'rat fodder' characters – the ones in every other chapter – could be the central ones as they tend to be more interesting than many of the others. A refreshing touch is that Herbert is not afraid to kill off his leading characters. Of the many players in the forefront of this novel, only the two really central ones survive – and one of them loses a hand in the process.

Overall I found the book well written and very exciting, although as another minor aside, I feel there would be far more menaces after a nuclear war than the few the author chooses to touch upon. (Rabid dogs, gung warfare, rats and radiation.) What about cheese, simple injuries would be almost impossible to treat as the drugs would be nile I feel (only really mentioned once in the book in an 'aside' piece about a mother with granny, her husband and kids dead in the



well-written account of human life after a nuclear bombardment has devastated London and goodness knows how much more of Britain, it is about 'Government' verses 'The People'; it is about survival. The mutant rats are in it but their fictional menace is largely unrealised as the very real horror of the bombs is far greater. Right from the opening, the book explodes with as much violence as those deadly bombs. After a brief prologue an excellent opening line: "The first bomb exploded just a few



kitchen). Generally, a lot more could have been made of the hopelessness of the situation.

Now that Herbert has established himself firmly in the public's eye and on the best seller list, he no longer needs to sensationalise his novels by titling them with increasingly gut-wrenching descriptions of mutilation and perversion. He has said in the past that this is what the public want but I would disagree - what the public want is a good entertaining read and that can be achieved without the 'nasty' elements. To date the only novel that does not touch upon the 'blatant horror' aspect is 'Fluke' and that is a very good book - not brilliant - but a well-written, entertaining read. I would like to see Herbert try this again as a good novelist like him should not need to hide behind stock formula.

David Howe

And now we move on to a selection of books which, although expensive, may be a way of using all those book tokens which seem to accumulate over the Christmas period. The first of these is the first book publication from WHO DARES, and hopefully not the last.

DOCTOR WHO - TIMEVIEW

Artwork by Frank Bellamy, commentary by David Bellamy (Who Dares Publishing, 58pp, £3.95 paperback; £5.95 hardback)

Frank Bellamy is an artist who will probably be remembered by many readers. Star Trek fans will possibly recall his '70s 'Radio Times' work. He will be remembered by the Gerry Anderson fans for his 'TV21' work on *Thunderbirds*. He will be remembered by ageing readers of 'The Eagle' for his work on 'Winston Churchill', 'Hercules the Spartan', 'Frazier of Africa' and the pioneering 'Dan Dare.' Even *The Avengers* viewers know of him, from his illustration in 'The Winged Avenger' episode, for which he provided the comic-book pages.

Above all, however, he will be remembered for his regular, and usually anonymous, contributions to the 'Radio Times' illustrating *Doctor Who*. From 1974 to 1976 Frank Bellamy provided pieces of artwork to accompany the programme's billing; covering the mid-Jon Pertwee years and the early Tom Baker era. Mostly they took the form of small, black-and-white portraits, but occasionally Bellamy was allowed to branch into larger black-and-white pieces, giving tantalising encapsulations of the episodes in question. On even rarer occasions Bellamy would be commissioned to provide full colour pages, including the first ever artwork *Doctor Who* cover.

Bellamy has a distinctive, punchy and very graphic style which won him many admirers and the 'Best Foreign Artist' award from the 48 STARBURST



American Academy of Comic Book Arts, for his *Star Trek* work. All of his *Doctor Who* work is included in 'Timeview - The Complete Doctor Who Illustrations of Frank Bellamy', including a full page composite for BBC Enterprises, used to publicise the Blackpool *Doctor Who* Exhibition.

The excellent artwork is accompanied by short, perfunctory and rather unnecessary plot synopses and, contrastingly, an informative commentary by Frank's illustrious son, David. This includes reflections on his father's artistic preferences as well as detailing some of his methods, which should be of special interest to budding or potential artists. Interestingly, Bellamy Sr was not a great fan of the SF genre, preferring to work on Earth's earlier periods, as chronicled in his earlier 'Eagle' work ('Marco Polo' and 'Robin Hood' for example).

The arrangement of text and art seems a little arbitrary, making it a mile difficult to follow, but this is a minor criticism.

More seriously the book falls down technically, as only one piece of Bellamy's artwork has been reproduced from its original; the others have been enlarged from the 'Radio Times' as the originals were untraceable. Ironically the only original piece, a stunning colour page from the 1975 story 'Terror of the Zygons', is the worst presented as it lacks the blue pass that gave it such impact when it was originally printed. Hopefully this can be corrected in any subsequent reprint.

Despite this the book is an admirable testament to one of this country's best graphic artists. Perhaps someone will have the foresight to publish a more comprehensive portfolio... I'll be first in the queue!

Julian Knott

I love fantastic artwork, and I count Boris Vallejo's *MIRAGE* book as one of my favourite art books. Now there is another book from this talented man.

FANTASY ART TECHNIQUES

By Boris Vallejo.

Foreword by Isaac Asimov.

Paper Tiger, 128pp.

£7.95 limpback, £12.95 hardback

'I have always had the facility to draw' is Boris Vallejo's opening comment in this third book of his paintings to be published and, like Isaac Asimov in the foreword, I have a zero-talent pictorial ability but I think that not being able to draw myself heightens my admiration of those that can. It you have never seen any of Boris Vallejo's work (and you may well have seen it and not realised it as he has illustrated hundreds of book covers as well as several pieces for *Men's* magazines) then you are missing out on an artist of startling talent.

To describe his work as painting is an understatement. All the characters, from the rippling muscles of the heroes and their well-endowed, classically beautiful ladies, to the demons, devils and fantastic monsters, leap from the pages in almost life-like perspective and colour. But Boris Vallejo does not arrange for the denizens of hell to pose for him like *Lovecraft's* Pickman, he is a human being and this publication is an attempt to demystify his work by explaining his methods for laymen like myself who consider it skillful to colour-in a pre-drawn picture to make it look presentable.

So here Vallejo lets us in on some of his secrets. Telling the reader step by step through the concept to the finished piece, stopping to look at skin tones and models on the way, the book acts

as a sort of painting bible, offering, not hints and tips, but simply how Boris does it. The paintings themselves are reproduced very well, as is generally the case with the Oregon's World publications (of which Paper Tiger is an imprint), and if one flicks through the book, the paintings catch the eye first, but the text, written by Boris, also beckons as the desire to find out what he is saying or explaining about the pictures you have just seen is irresistible.

At the end of the book, after a great many superb pictures and concepts, three paintings are discussed in greater detail. From the initial concepts, to the sketches, to under-painting, to the finished piece, each is explained step by step pulling together the things that have been said in the rest of the book into the finished masterpieces.

If you are a fan of Boris' work, or if you like fantasy artwork, or even if you only like achingly luscious women, then this book is a must. Probably not the sort of thing to leave on one's coffee table if you have a prudish aunt staying, as scantly clad ladies and gentlemen abound but for the quality of the art and the superb rendering of the fantastic and an entertaining and informing commentary about one artist's methods, you really cannot go wrong.

David Howe

Finally, another book which caught my eye is one that has been out for some time. Again from Paper Tiger, *WALT DISNEY'S WORLD OF FANTASY* by Adrian Bailey, is a lavishly illustrated account of Walt Disney's career and his contribution to the animated cartoon industry and to the development of the massive Theme Parks in America. At £12.95 in hardback it is a lot, but for cartoon and Disney buffs everywhere, again, it is a must.



FEEDBACK

**Starburst Letters
Visual Imagination
38 Melrose Avenue
Wimbledon Park
London SW19 8BY**

More Blake please!

**Zoe Taylor
Colchester Essex**

As a "Blake's 7" fan I was pleased to see Vere Lorrimer's article about mistakes during the filming. The picture of Blake at the end, is one of the best I've seen in a magazine like Starburst. I disagree with Mr Andrews in T.V. Zone, about Blake's 7 fan letters doing little good. So far we have had a repeat of the fourth series. They have caused the Beeb to go against their word, never to mention "Blake's 7" again and of course there is the video of the first four episodes.

If you can keep up interest with articles, maybe you'll be running one on the 5th series or even the movie, it is being shown over in America now. Hope to see more.

Rolling about with Laughter

**Paul Chelloner
Cannock, Staffs**

I just thought I'd drop you a line to let you know what a wonderful job ITV did in screening Brian De Palma's "Dressed to Kill" recently (sarcasm intended). What do these morons think they are doing! They did a wonderful hatchet job on it and I was so disturbed on how much they censored I could not stop myself from writing. I found it quite exciting viewing, trying to spot what had been cut out, and oh I thought the overdubbing on the films sound track quite hilarious especially when they changed numerous four-letter words to such phrases as 'heck' and 'damn'. This had me rolling about with laughter on the floor. I mean you could just imagine a tough street-wise prostitute saying "Oh damn and blast ill" etc. The beginning of the film was absolutely chopped to pieces. What happened to Angela Dickinson's famous shower scene? OK it's a bit below the belt but it sets the tone for the film. Any person viewing this for the first time wouldn't stand a chance of understanding what the hell was going on, one minute in shower next minute in bed. They even took out her 'wham bam



special' I just pity all the people who have not seen this marvellous movie before and had the unfortunate luck viewing it on TV for the first time. De Palma's films are tough and shocking that's true especially "Dressed to Kill" with its explicit language and violence but for God's sake that's what this movie is all about! It is supposed to shock! I am fortunate to have it already on video and I urge all those who have not seen it already

in its unexpurgated version to rent it!

I have noticed that all the late-night films ITV have screened recently on a Saturday night have been cut and hacked about. Surely if they have been put on late it would be classed as adult material. I mean there aren't many children watching TV at that time so why the hell bother. For instance I cringed with horror when watching that fabulous film

"Body Heat" when they decided to remove an important scene. The scene I am referring to is the seduction of Kathleen Turner on the floor in the hall of her house. Why they removed this is beyond me. All William Hurt does is remove her knickers. I mean it's all tastefully done and there is nothing explicit on show. Besides it's a very moving scene and helps to show the electricity between these two characters

They also hacked a large amount of John Barry's terrific score from that scene too. What a crime! They deserve to be roasted over an open fire!

All I can say is that I am glad I own a video recorder where I can watch films without those wondrous scissors going snip snip. Surely ITV should reconsider when censoring first-rate movies when you get such trash as "Jubilee" being screened without being cut.

I for one shall stay well away from future showings of "X"-rated movies on ITV. After all (and ITV should keep this in mind) who needs TV channels with the advent of video recorders when you can watch any film you want untouched by their God-forsaken hands!

Keep up the good work. It's still the best fantasy magazine around. How about including some really gory pictures in your next issue, just to get the censors going!

Packed!

Dino Vessallo
Bungay, Suffolk

Just a few words about issue eighty-nine of "Starburst". It was packed with good reviews and some really good photos from the films and television programmes. A very good review of "Amazing Stories" (at last!) and "Back to the Future" plus more pages and



DUNE: Feyd-Rautha (Sieg) fights Paul Atreides (Kyle MacLachlan)

colour! Will "Starburst" be giving a bigger review on "King Solomon's Mines" when it's released (hope so!) and is there any set date for the release of "Amazing Stories" in the UK?

Editor: Well I certainly enjoyed "King Solomon's Mines" but we don't at present have plans for further coverage. "Amazing Stories" is planned for Theatrical release in April.

"Dune" abysmal

David Watkins
Swaffham, Norfolk

I would very much like to nominate "Dune" as one of the most abysmally bad films I have been unfortunate enough to see. The script was dreadful, the characters paper thin, the effects awful. Scenes such as the Baron being swallowed by the worm and the fake-looking and totally

unnecessary third stage Guild navigator being questioned by the emperor will stay with me for a long time, simply because of their sheer awfulness. Even the cine cast could not save the absolutely epic "Turkey". I only hope that someday someone films Frank Herbert's novel and gets it right, but I doubt it. I think the mess David Lynch made of it will discourage others from even trying. A pity!

Trek not boring

B. Wright
Eastleigh, Hants

I'd just like to say I was pleased to see the article on the banned "Star Trek" shows.

To my knowledge you must be the first magazine to do this. My letter campaign started in 1971, and a magazine World of Horror was about to do an article on the subject. However, they folded, and I never came to light.

Mark Burman's letter in issue 89 said it brought a yawn to most readers. But the general public don't all go to conventions, or join fan clubs. Actually, letters like his are more "boring" and "old hat".

And just one more bit of information - there is now a Buck Rogers episode banned! "The Satyr". Wonder what chances we have of seeing this series (or episode) again.

Bidi bidi bid! far chance Buck...

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Starburst # 90 (1986)

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